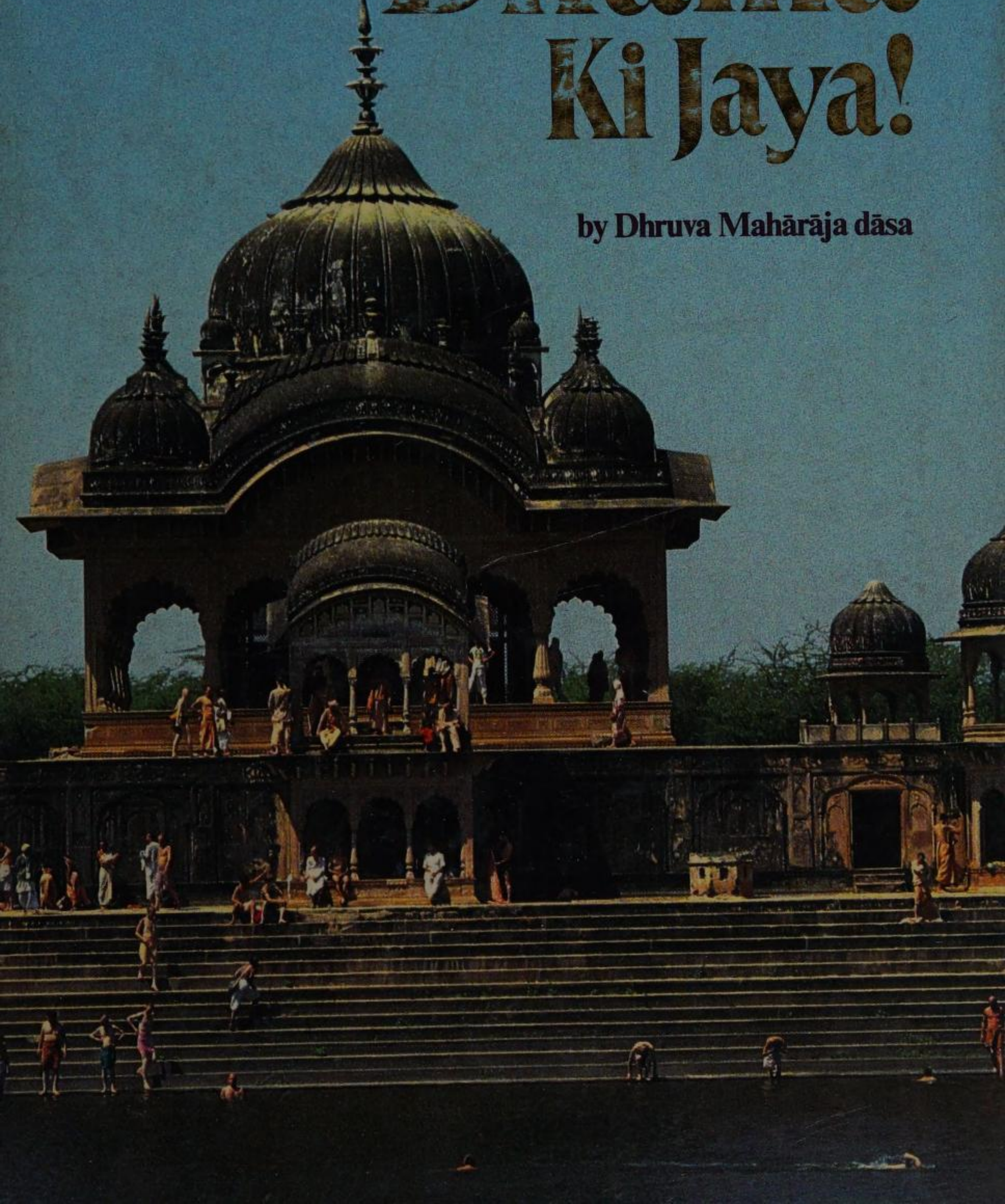
A Pictorial Guide to the Land of Kṛṣṇa

Vṛndāvana Dhāma Ki Jaya!

by Dhruva Mahārāja dāsa



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Vṛndāvana-Dhāma Ki Jaya!

anyatra kṣaṇa-mātram acyuta-pure premāmṛtāmbhonidhi-
snāto 'py acyuta-saj-janair api samaṁ nāhaṁ vasāmi kvacit
kintv atra vraja-vāsinām api samaṁ yenāpi kenāpy alaṁ
saṁlāpair mama nirbharaḥ pratimuhur vāso 'stu nityaṁ mama

Even if I have the opportunity to bathe in the nectarean ocean of pure love of Kṛṣṇa, and even if I have the pure devotees of the infallible Supreme Personality of Godhead as my associates, I will not consent to live, even for a single moment, in any sacred place other than Vrajabhūmi. Even if the residents of Vraja appear to be ordinary, and even if they fill my ears with useless gossip, I pray that I may remain among them, eternally residing here in Vraja.

—*Śrī Vraja-vilāsa-stava,* Text 105

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To my spiritual master,
His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda,
on the tenth anniversary
of his entrance into Goloka Vṛndāvana,
Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal abode.

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Preface

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Personality of Godhead, is attractive not only in His personal features, but also in His transcendental activities. It is so because the Absolute is absolute by His name, fame, form, pastimes, entourage, paraphernalia, etc. The Lord descends on this material world out of His causeless mercy and displays His various transcendental pastimes as a human being so that human beings attracted towards Him become able to go back to Godhead. Men are naturally apt to hear histories and narrations of various personalities performing mundane activities, without knowing that by such association one simply wastes valuable time and also becomes addicted to the three qualities of mundane nature. Instead of wasting time, one can get spiritual success by turning his attention to the transcendental pastimes of the Lord. By hearing the narration of the pastimes of the Lord, one contacts directly the Personality of Godhead, and, as explained before, by hearing about the Personality of Godhead, from within, all accumulated sins of the mundane creature are cleared. Thus being cleared of all sins, the hearer gradually becomes liberated from mundane association and becomes attracted to the features of the Lord. Nārada Muni has just explained this by his personal experience. The whole idea is that simply by hearing about the Lord's pastimes one can become one of the associates of the Lord. Nārada Muni has eternal life, unlimited knowledge and unfathomed bliss, and he can travel all over the material and spiritual worlds without restriction. One can attain to the highest perfection of life simply by attentive hearing of the transcendental pastimes of the Lord from the right sources, as Śrī Nārada heard them from the pure devotees (*bhakti-vedāntas*) in his previous life. This process of hearing in the association of the devotees is especially recommended in this age of quarrel (Kali).

—*Bhāg.* 1.5.26, purport by His
Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupāda

Introduction

On this most auspicious day—the five hundredth anniversary of the advent of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu—let me offer my respectful obeisances unto His lotus feet. I also offer my humble obeisances to my spiritual master, His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, by whose mercy I have come to learn of Lord Caitanya. To fulfill their desires, I have undertaken this work.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Kṛṣṇa Himself, but in the present age of Kali-yuga He appeared in the form of a devotee to inaugurate the *saṅkīrtana* movement of congregational chanting of the names of the Lord: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/ Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu met with Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in Prayāg and, after instructing him in the mellows of devotional service, ordered him to proceed to Vṛndāvana to excavate the lost holy places, establish Deity worship, and write books concerning devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. He later ordered Rūpa Gosvāmī's brother, Sanātana Gosvāmī, in the same way. The Lord's display of mercy toward the two brothers is described in Act Nine of *Caitanya-candrodaya-nāṭaka*, by Śrī Kavi-Karṇapūra:

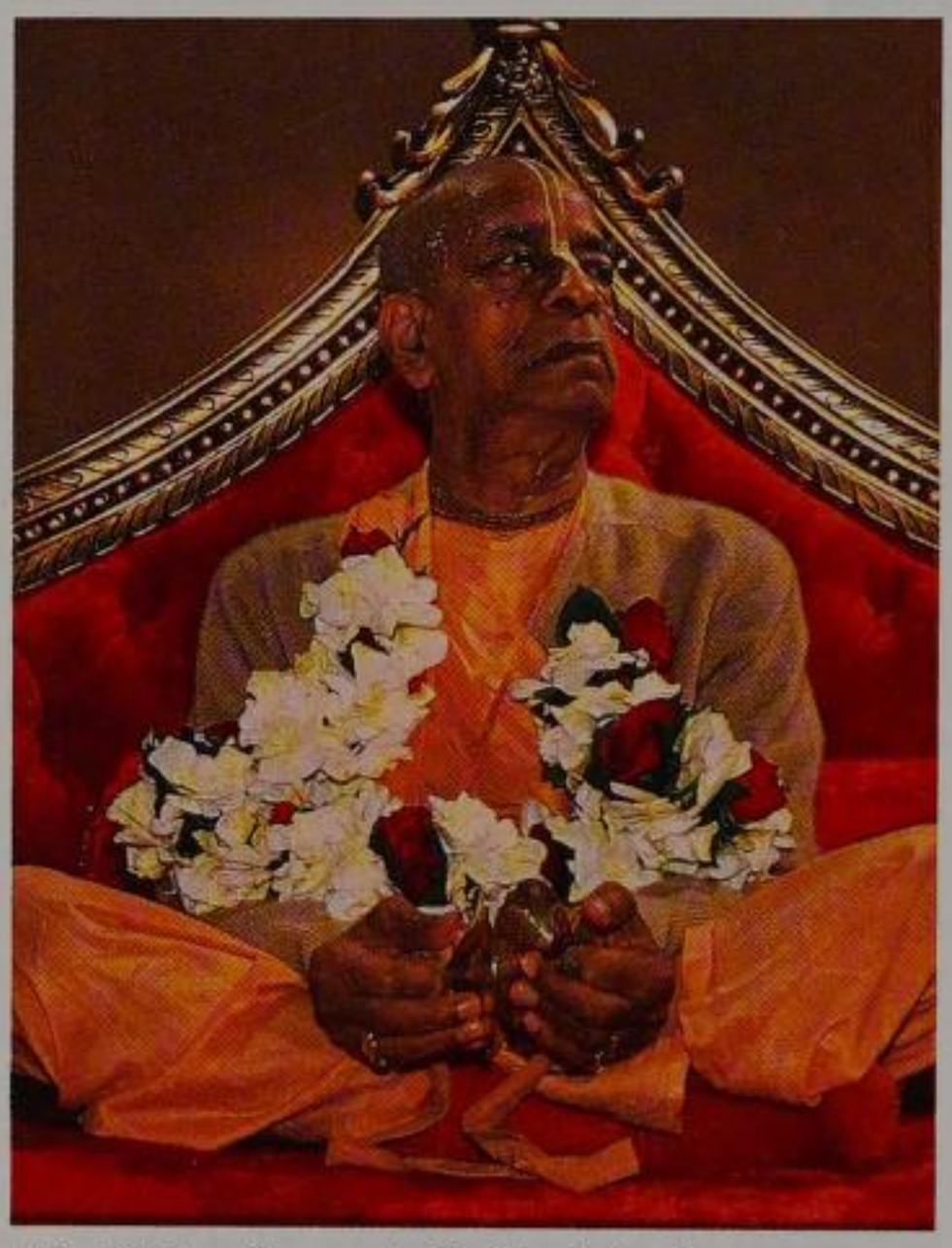
"In the course of time, the transcendental news of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vṛndāvana were almost lost. To enunciate explicitly those transcendental pastimes, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, at Prayāg, empowered Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī with the nectar of His mercy to carry out this work in Vṛndāvana."

"Before the creation of this cosmic manifestation, the Lord enlightened the heart of Lord Brahmā with the details of the creation and manifested the Vedic knowledge. In exactly the same way, the Lord, being anxious to revive the Vṛndāvana pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa, impregnated the heart of Rūpa Gosvāmī with spiritual potency. By this potency, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī could revive the activities of Kṛṣṇa in Vṛndāvana, activities almost lost to memory. In this way, He spread

Kṛṣṇa consciousness throughout the world" (Cc. *Madhya* 19.1*).

Thus, Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, by their preaching and work, revealed Vṛndāvana and the transcendental news of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes there. His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, to fulfill the desires of his spiritual master, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, that the glories of Vṛndāvana be broadcast throughout the world, translated some of the Gosvāmīs' books into English. He also founded the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and by his inspiration devotees from around the globe now worship Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His transcendental abode, Śrī Vṛndāvana-dhāma.

Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu



His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

To encourage people to visit Vṛndāvana, Śrīla Prabhupāda established the Krishna-Balarām Mandir on Rama Naumī (the appearance day of Lord Rāmacandra) in 1975, in the town of Pañcakrośī Vṛndāvana. Since the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement had spread around the world by that time, Prabhupāda wanted to build a temple and *āśrama* suitable for his Western disciples or anyone wanting to experience the transcendental mood of Vṛndāvana-dhāma.

In the Krishna-Balarām Mandir are the Deities of Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi, Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma, and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara. Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to show the world that Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityānanda are nondifferent from Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Balarāma. The complex also includes an international guesthouse, with a pure vegetarian restaurant, and the Bhaktivedanta Swami International Gurukula (a school for boys ages 6–16).

On November 14, 1977, Śrīla Prabhupāda entered *samādhi* while surrounded by loving disciples performing *kīrtana*. His *samādhi* tomb, located just in front of the Krishna-Balarām Mandir, as well as the house in which he lived and which contains many of his personal items, are open to the public. Only by his mercy have

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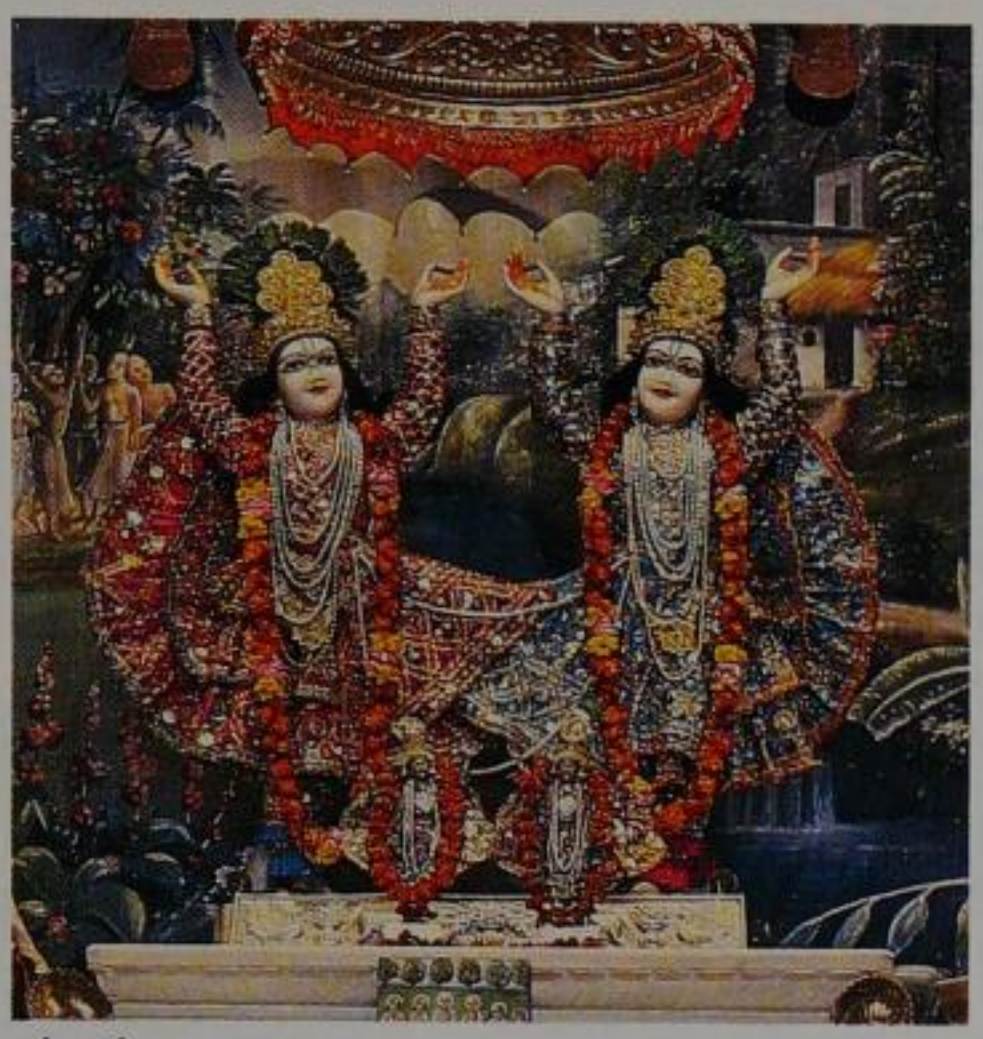
* An explanation of the references in this book can be found in the Bibliography.



Śrī Śrī Gaura-Nitāi

Śrī Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma

Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara

we been allowed to engage in Kṛṣṇa's service in Vṛndāvana-dhāma; therefore we bow down to pray at his lotus feet for proper guidance in this endeavor.

Lord Kṛṣṇa's energies are divided into three categories: internal, external, and marginal. The internal energies include His name, fame, paraphernalia, abode, and so on; the external energies include the gross and subtle forms of matter; and the marginal energies are the minute living entities.

Beyond this universe, which is a manifestation of the external energy, are innumerable other universes floating in the *mahat-tattva.* This entire region, consisting of millions of universes with their millions of planets and inhabitants, constitutes only one quarter of the entire creation. The other three quarters consists of the spiritual sky, or the kingdom of God.

Once in a day of Brahmā (which according to *Bhagavad-gītā* is 4,300,000 years multiplied by 1,000), the Supreme Lord descends from the spiritual sky into this universe along with His associates to enact pastimes that will attract the conditioned living beings back home to the spiritual world. The time for Lord Kṛṣṇa's advent occurred 5,000 years ago, and when He descended He did so in Mathurā, the center of the lotus of Vraja-maṇḍala. Along with Kṛṣṇa and His eternal associates came His *dhāma*, or residence.

The living beings who descend with Lord Kṛṣṇa are eternally liberated, and neither He nor they are ever affected by the external energy. Similarly, His *dhāma* is constructed from the internal potency and is never influenced by the three modes of material nature. Paintings and photographs of Vraja are like windows on the spiritual dimension, and according to a person's spiritual advancement, he or she can understand and perceive the true

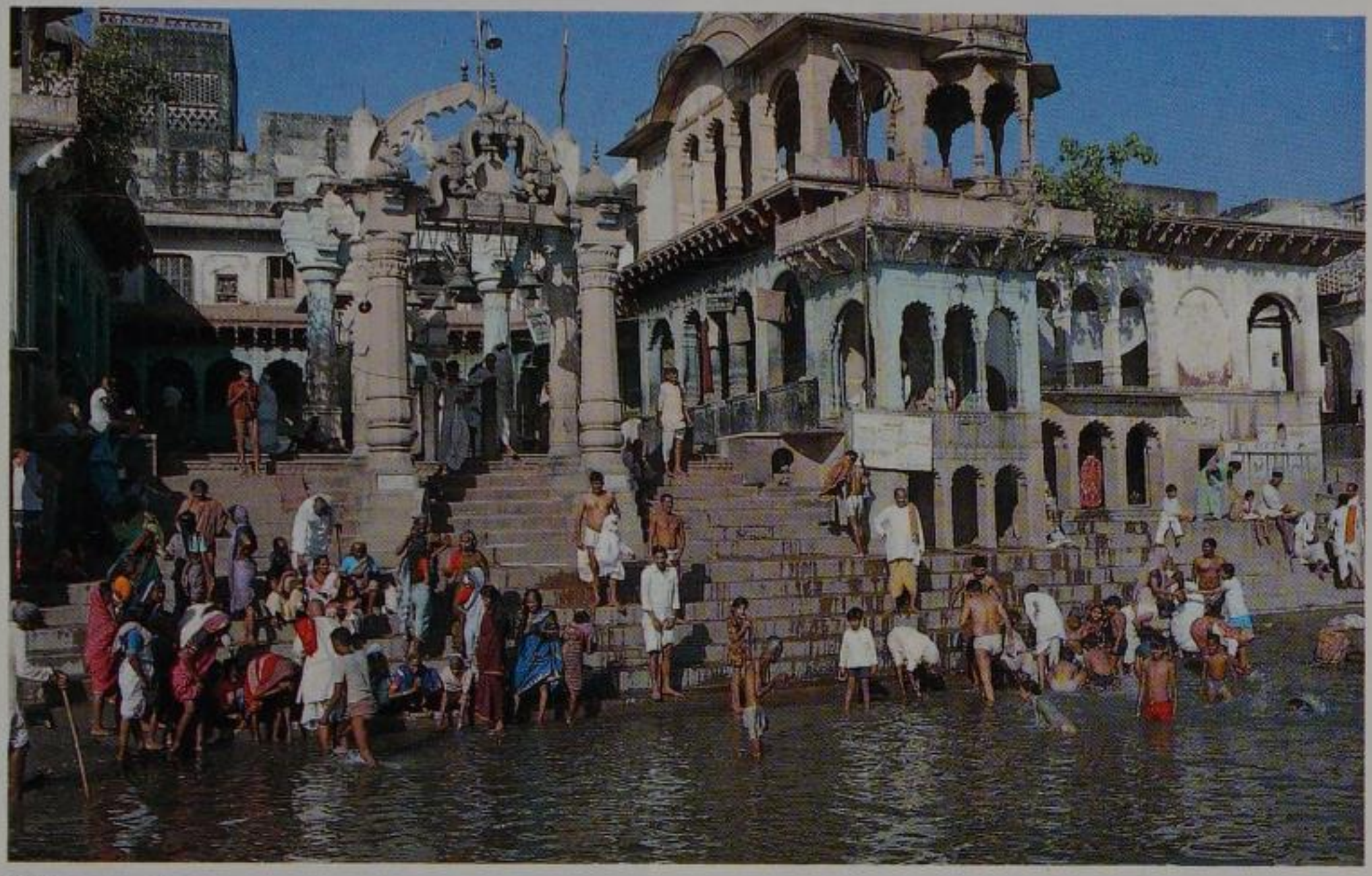
beauty of these transcendental images.

For several centuries now, millions of pilgrims have been visiting the Vraja area every year, and each pilgrim has his or her own devotional sentiments toward Kṛṣṇa. This volume cannot possibly discuss all the places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes or all the devotees from different *sampradāyas* who live in or visit Vṛndāvana. The Lord's pastimes and His devotees are unlimited. This book presents Vṛndāvana as seen through the eyes of the devotees in the Mādhva-Gauḍīya *sampradāya*. We hope that people from all different angles of vision will get enlightenment from it.

Every year during the autumn season, thousands of pilgrims circumambulate the eighty-four-square-mile area of Vraja. This sacred tour of the entire Vṛndāvana area is known as *carausi kos parikrama*. The pilgrims begin at Viśrama-ghāṭa in Mathurā and proceed clockwise throughout the entire Vraja-maṇḍala, taking about one month. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu followed a similar route when He visited Vṛndāvana, and with this book we hope to allow you to take the same tour—without having to move from your seat.

—Dhruva Mahārāja dāsa
Gaura-Pūrṇimā
March 26, 1986

Vṛndāvana-Dhāma Ki Jaya!



Viśrama-ghāṭa

Viśrama-ghāṭa

Viśrama means "to rest." After Lord Kṛṣṇa in His boar incarnation (Varāha) killed Hiraṇyākṣa, He spoke the *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* to mother Earth while resting at Viśrama-ghāṭa. Thousands of years later He rested here after killing Kaṁsa and dragging his body to the shores of the Yamunā.

Lord Kṛṣṇa and Lord Balarāma went to Mathurā from Vṛndāvana and killed Their maternal uncle, Kaṁsa, who had given much trouble to Their parents, Vasudeva and Devakī. Kaṁsa was a great giant, and Vasudeva and Devakī thought that Kṛṣṇa and Baladeva would never be able to kill such a strong enemy. When the two brothers attacked Kaṁsa on the throne, Their parents feared that now Kaṁsa would finally get the opportunity to kill their sons, whom they had hidden for so long in the house of Nanda Mahārāja. The parents of the Lord felt great danger because of parental affection and almost fainted. After Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma killed Kaṁsa, they pulled his dead body along the ground to the Yamunā River, just to convince Their parents that They had actually killed him.

Pilgrims generally bathe here to become purified before beginning their journey, and some witness the beautiful sunset *ārati* ceremony to the Yamunā River. Lord Caitanya bathed here and in twenty-four other *ghāṭas* north and south of here.

Durvāsā Muni's Āśrama

"Durvāsā Muni: A powerful mystic *brāhmaṇa* determined to observe the principles of religion with great vows and under strict austerities. His name is associated with many historical events, and it appears that the great mystic could be both easily satisfied and easily annoyed, like Lord Śiva. When he was satisfied, he could do tremendous good to the servitor, but if

Deities of Durvāsa Muni and Kṛṣṇa

he was dissatisfied he could bring about the greatest calamity. Kumārī Kuntī, at her father's house, used to minister all kinds of services to the great *brāhmaṇas*, and being satisfied with her good reception Durvāsā Muni benedicted her with a power to call any demigod she desired. It is understood that he was a plenary incarnation of Lord Śiva, and thus he could be either easily satisfied or annoyed. He was a great devotee of Lord Śiva, and by Lord Śiva's order he accepted the priesthood of King Śvetaketu because of the King's performance of sacrifice for one hundred years. Sometimes he used to visit the parliamentary assembly of the heavenly kingdom of Indradeva. He could travel a great distance through space, even up to the Vaikuṇṭha planets beyond material space. He traveled all these long distances within one year, during his quarrel with King Ambarīṣa, the great devotee and emperor of the world" (*Bhāg.* 1.15.11, purport).

The place of King Ambarīṣa's sacrificial performance is in Mathurā City and is known as Ambarīṣatilā or Cakra-tīrtha.

Durvāsā Muni was also pleased with the services rendered by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. She received the benediction from him that whatever She cooked would be sweeter than nectar. That is the special feature of Her cooking. Durvāsā Muni used to perform penances and austerities on the banks of the Yamunā River opposite Viśrama-ghāṭa.

Pippaleśvara Mahādeva

Four main *śiva-liṅgas* protect Mathurā from four sides. Just south of Viśrama-ghāṭa, this *śiva-liṅga* is the *dik-pāla* (protector) of Mathurā's eastern quarter. The other three *dik-pālas* are Gokarṇeśvara, in the north; Bhūteśvara, in the west; and Raṅgeśvara, in the south.

Pippaleśvara

Śveta-varāha Mandira and Ādi-varāha Mandira

Pilgrims proceed down the side-street next to the Dvārakādhīśa temple

Ādi-varāha

and turn right at a small Śiva temple to have *darśana* (audience) of the Śveta-varāha *mūrti*. The owners of the house in which He is situated do not allow "non-Hindus" inside, but one can see the Deity from the street when the curtain in front of the Deity is open.

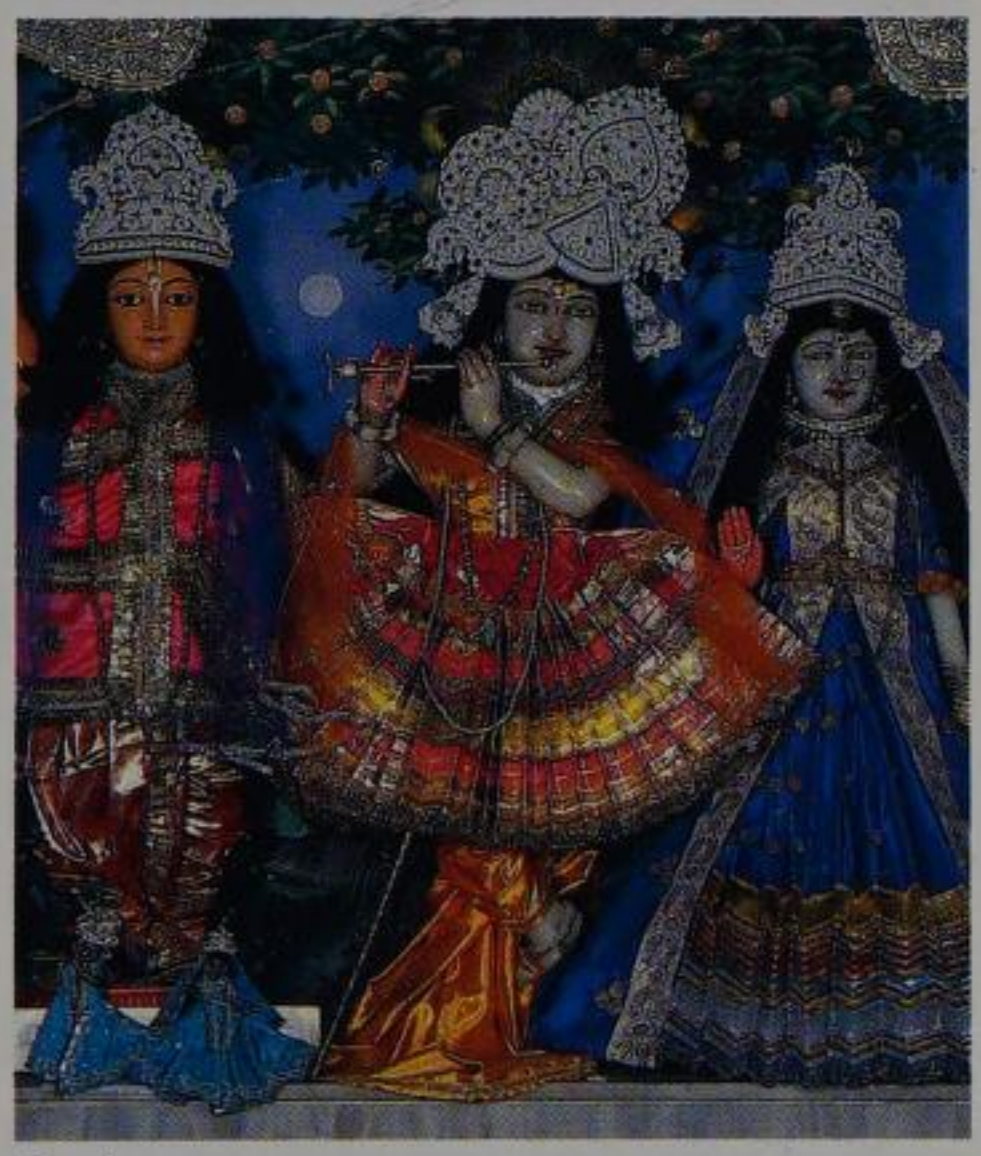
Further up the same street is the temple of Ādi-varāha, probably the oldest Deity in the area. In the Satya-yuga a sage named Kapila gave the Deity to Lord Indra, the demigod in charge of rainfall. Lord Indra took the Deity to his residence in the heavenly planets to be worshiped. When his kingdom was usurped by Rāvaṇa, Indra lost possession of the *mūrti*, and Rāvaṇa took Śveta-varāha with him to his capital of Śrī Laṅkā.

After a long time Lord Rāmacandra came to Laṅkā and killed Rāvaṇa. When Rāvaṇa's brother Vibhīṣaṇa was installed on the throne, he offered everything to Rāma, but Rāma refused the kingdom. He told Vibhīṣaṇa, "O Rākṣasa Vibhīṣaṇa, I shall not have anything to do with all this. You may just give Me the Deity that was taken here from the city of Indra. I shall take Him to Ayodhyā and worship Him every day." Vibhīṣaṇa gave Rāma the Kapila-varāha, whom Rāma carried to Ayodhyā in a flower airplane. He installed the Deity at Ayodhyā and worshiped Him there for 110 years. Then, when Śatrughna, Lord Rāma's brother, went to Madhupurī (Mathurā) to defeat some demons, he brought the Deity with him, and Lord Śveta-varāha has been there ever since.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura visited this sacred temple during a *parikrama* he led that has been recorded in a book called *Śrī Śrī Vraja-maṇḍala-parikrama*.

Keśava Gauḍīya Maṭha

This temple was established by Śrīla Bhaktiprajñāna Keśava Gosvāmī Mahārāja, the *sannyāsa-guru* of Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda. It was recently renovated under the direction of His Holiness Bhaktivedanta Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja. The presiding Deities are Śrī Śrī Rādhā-vinoda-vihārī. There is also a



Śrī Śrī Rādhā-vinoda-vihārī at the Keśava Gauḍīya Maṭha

Kṛṣṇa kills the evil King Kaṁsa in the wrestling arena

Govardhana-śilā, and a *mūrti* of Bhaktiprajñāna Keśava Mahārāja. The Lord Caitanya Deity next to Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa was donated to this temple by Śrīla Prabhupāda, who accepted the renounced order of life from Keśava Mahārāja here in 1959.

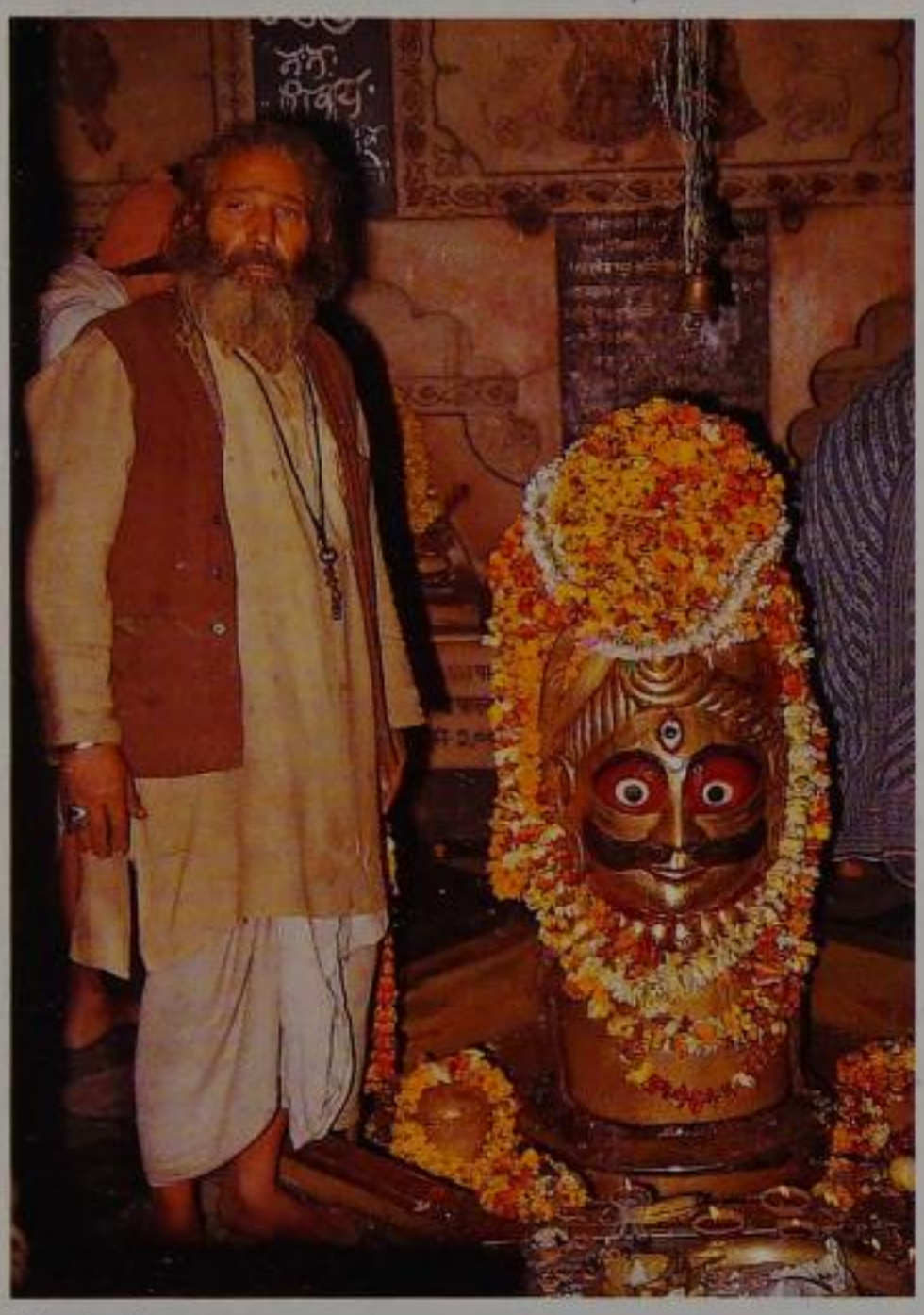
Raṅga-bhūmi

This is where the wrestling match took place between Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma, and the professional wrestlers of Kaṁsa. Kaṁsa was killed on the hill known as Kaṁsa-tilā, opposite the present Main Post Office.

Raṅgeśvara Mahādeva

Raṅgeśvara is the *dik-pāla* of Mathurā's southern section. Raṅgeśvara is the most visited of the four *dik-pālas*.

Demoniac people sometimes worship demigods to fulfill their materialistic desires. Kaṁsa worshiped the Raṅgeśvara-*liṅga* before the wrestling match with Kṛṣṇa.



Raṅgeśvara

Gokarṇeśvara

The *Bhāgavata-māhātmya* section of the *Padma Purāṇa* contains a description of the activities of the sage Gokarṇa. He was born to a cow who had eaten a sacrificial fruit offered by a *brāhmaṇa*, and thus he was born with ears like those of a cow (*go* means "cow" and *karṇa* means "ear"). He recited the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* before his demoniac brother, and thus his brother was liberated.

In the temple, located behind the All-India Radio Station, there is a *mūrti* of Gokarṇa along with a *śiva-liṅga*. This *liṅga* is the *dik-pāla* of Mathurā's northern quarter.

Gokarṇeśvara

Padmanābha Svayambhū

Svayam translates as "Himself," and *bhū* means "born." In other words, this Padmanābha Deity is born of Himself, or self-manifested. Caitanya Mahāprabhu had *darśana* of this Deity in A.D. 1515 while visiting Mathurā City.

Padmanābha Svayambhū

Dīrgha Viṣṇu

Dīrgha Viṣṇu Mandira

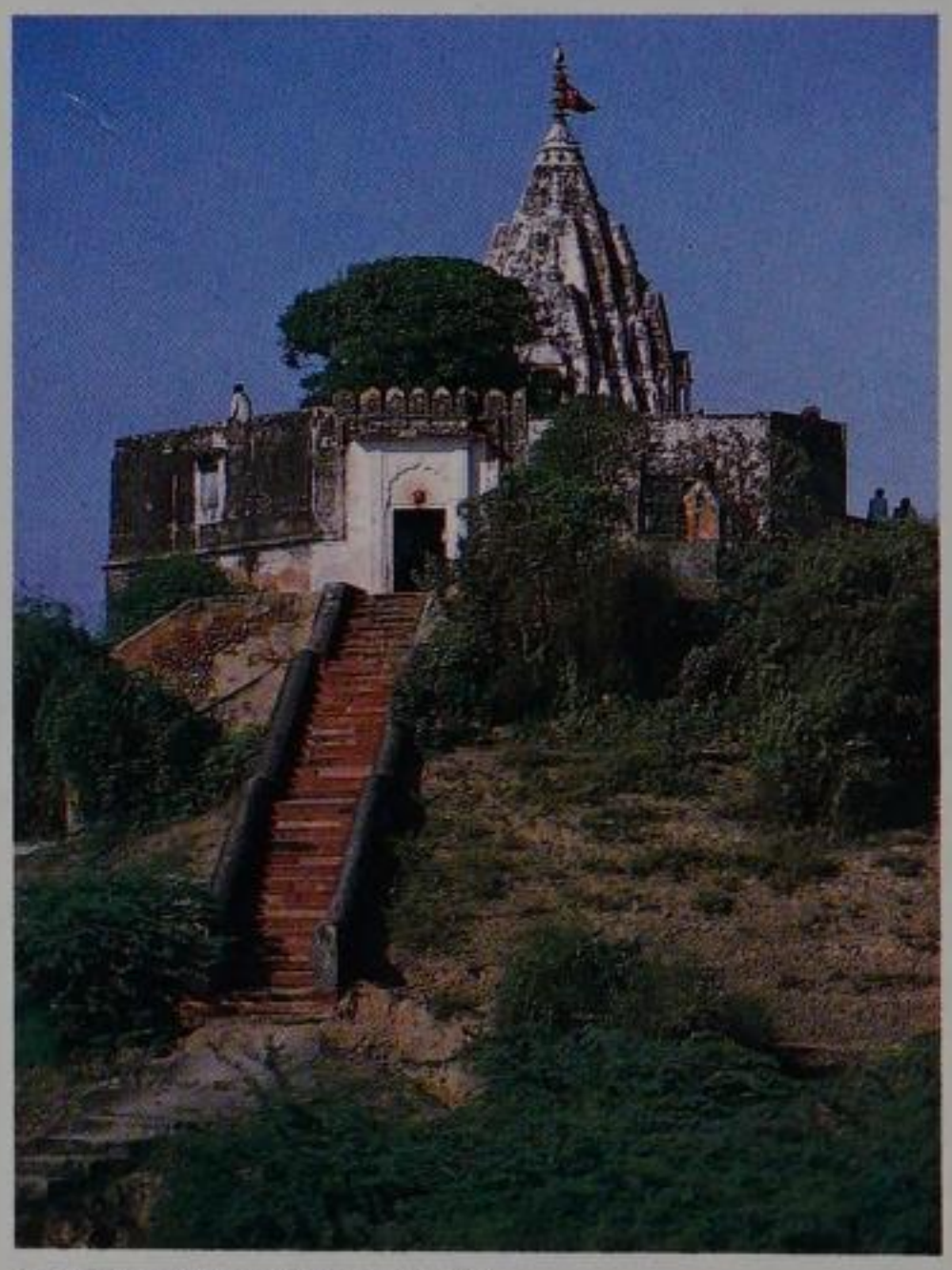
When Lord Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma entered the city of Mathurā to engage in a wrestling match with Kaṁsa, Kṛṣṇa first killed a washerman who refused to supply Him with cloth; He blessed a florist named Sudāmā, who offered Them a nice seat, flowers, betel nuts, and the pulp of *candana* (sandalwood paste); and He gave mercy to Kubjā, a hunchbacked woman who supplied Him with sandalwood pulp. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma then proceeded to Kaṁsa's sacrificial arena, where They broke the sacrificial bow that had been arranged for the sacrifice called Dhanur-yajña.

At that time Kṛṣṇa displayed the Dīrgha Viṣṇu form to assure His friends that He would have no trouble defeating Kaṁsa. The Dīrgha Viṣṇu form was immense (*dīrgha* means "large"), like the form Lord Vāmanadeva showed to Bali Mahārāja when He expanded Himself to cover the entire universe with only two steps.

Mahā-vidyā-devī Mandira

Shortly after Lord Kṛṣṇa's appearance in the prison house of Kaṁsa, Vasudeva carried baby Kṛṣṇa across the Yamunā River to the house of Nanda Mahārāja in Gokula and exchanged his baby boy for a baby girl just born to Yaśodā. He then returned to the prison house in Mathurā.

When cruel Kaṁsa heard that Devakī had again given birth, he went to the cell where Vasudeva and Devakī were shackled in iron chains, took the baby girl from his sister, and tried to dash the child against the stones. To his surprise she slipped from his hands and flew into the sky, where she exhibited an eight-armed form as the younger sister of Viṣṇu. She was decorated with nice dress and flower garlands and ornaments; in her



Mahā-vidyā-devī temple

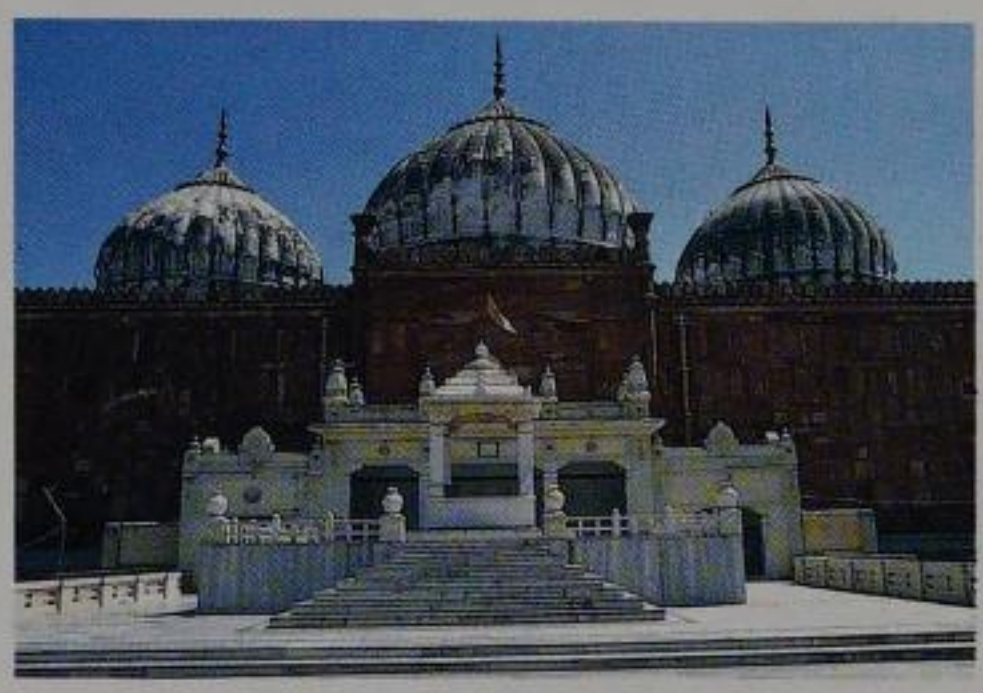
eight hands she held a bow, lance, arrows, bell, conchshell, disc, club, and shield. She addressed Kaṁsa, "You rascal, how can you kill me? The child who will kill you is already born before me somewhere within this material world. Don't be so cruel to your poor sister."

Janma-bhūmi

In *Bhagavad-gītā*, Lord Kṛṣṇa says that His birth and activities are transcendental and one who understands them factually becomes immediately eligible to be transferred to the spiritual world. The Lord's birth is not like that of an ordinary man, who is forced to accept a material body according to his past deeds. The Lord's appearance is explained in the Second Chapter of the *Gītā*: He appears out of His own sweet pleasure.

"When the time was mature for the appearance of the Lord, the constellations became very auspicious. The astrological influence of the star known as Rohiṇī was also predominant because this star is considered to be very auspicious. Rohiṇī is under the direct supervision of Brahmā. According to the astrological conclusion, besides the proper situation of the stars, there are auspicious and inauspicious moments because of the different situations of the different planetary systems. At the time of Lord Kṛṣṇa's birth, all the planetary systems were automatically adjusted so that everything became very auspicious.

"At that time, in all directions, east, west, south, north, everywhere, there was an atmosphere of peace and prosperity. There were auspicious stars visible in the sky, and on the earth, in all towns and villages or pasturing grounds and within the mind of everyone there were signs of good fortune. The rivers were flowing full of waters, and lakes were beautifully decorated with lotus flowers. The forests were full with beautiful birds and peacocks. All the birds within the forest began to sing with sweet voices, and the peacocks began to dance along with their consorts. The wind blew very pleasantly, carrying the aroma of different flowers, and the sensation of bodily touch was very pleasing. At home, the *brāhmaṇas*, who were accustomed to offer sacrifices in the fire, found their homes very pleasant for offerings. Due to disturbances created by the demoniac kings, the sacrificial fire altar had been almost stopped in the houses of *brāhmaṇas*, but now they could find



Srī Kṛṣṇa Janma-bhūmi

the opportunity to start the fire peacefully. Being forbidden to offer sacrifices, the *brāhmaṇas* were very distressed in mind, intelligence and activities, but just on the point of Kṛṣṇa's appearance, automatically their minds became full of joy because they could hear loud vibrations in the sky of transcendental sounds proclaiming the appearance of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

"The denizens of the Gandharva and Kinnara planets began to sing, and the denizens of Siddhaloka and the planets of the Cāraṇas began to offer prayers in the service of the Personality of Godhead. In the heavenly planets, the angels along with their wives, accompanied by the Apsarās, began to dance.

"The great sages and the demigods, being pleased, began to shower flowers. At the seashore, there was the

sound of mild waves, and above the sea there were clouds in the sky which began to thunder very pleasingly.

"When things were adjusted like this, Lord Viṣṇu, who is residing within the heart of every living entity, appeared in the darkness of night as the Supreme Personality of Godhead before Devakī, who also appeared as one of the demigoddesses. The appearance of Lord Viṣṇu at that time could be compared with the full moon in the sky as it rises on the eastern horizon" *(Kṛṣṇa*, Vol. 1, pp. 37–38).

"Your son Kṛṣṇa appears as an incarnation in every millennium. In the past, He assumed three different colors—white, red and yellow—and now He has appeared in a blackish color" (*Bhāg.* 10.8.3).

History reveals that the site where Lord Kṛṣṇa appeared, Kaṁsa's prison, has now changed considerably, though it remained the same for a long time.

Kṛṣṇa's great-grandson Vajranābha built the first temple here during his reign as the king of Mathurā. At that time Mahārāja Parīkṣit was the world emperor. Vajranābha was the son of Aniruddha, who's father was Pradyumna, the first son born to Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī. Vajranābha came to Mathurā and established hundreds of Deities and temples. He also excavated *kuṇḍas* (sacred ponds) and established many forests revealing and glorifying Kṛṣṇa's activities. Some of the Deities He installed are Madana-mohana, Govindajī, Gopinātha, and Śrī Nāthajī. He also installed several *śiva-liṅgas* and established many Devī temples throughout the Vraja area.

The next temple at the site of Kṛṣṇa's appearance was built around 400 B.C. by King Vikramāditya. In A.D. 1017 it was destroyed by Muhammad Ghaznavi. According to ancient Sanskrit inscriptions on the temple, a third temple was built by a man named Jajja during the time of King Vijayapālavadeva, who ruled over Mathurā. This was the structure visited by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu around A.D. 1515. It was soon after destroyed.

In A.D. 1650 there was a magnificent temple constructed that stood some 250 feet high. The Muslim Emperor Aurangzeb, however, despised the temple's magnificence. He demolished the temple and with the broken pieces constructed a mosque that still stands. Beside the mosque is the present temple, which was begun in 1965 and today serves as a beautiful place for devotees from around the world to visit. There are several sets of deities

Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Keśava

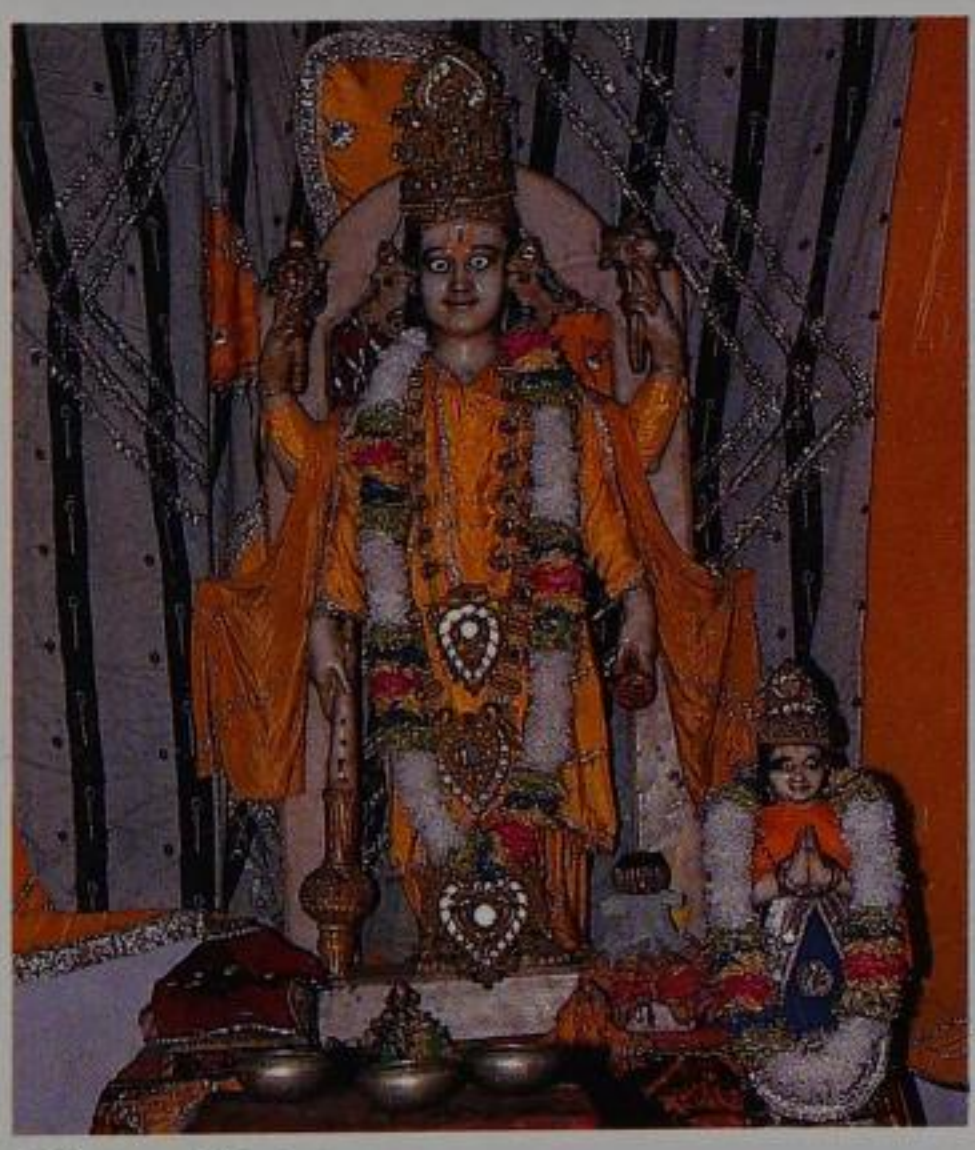
uniquely arranged within: Lord Jagannātha, Balarāma, and Subhadrā, being viewed by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu; Rādhā-keśava, being viewed by the three men who financed the construction (Yugala-kiśora Birla, Madan Mohan Malavir, and Hanuman Prasada Poddar); Sītā, Rāma, and Lakṣmaṇa, being viewed by Hanumān; and a *śiva-liṅga* being viewed by Durgā-devī.

Just next to the temple, on the side of the mosque, is a replica of Kaṁsa's prison that many pilgrims also visit. About five hundred yards away is a cave where Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu stayed while in Mathurā.

Bhūteśvara

Bhūteśvara Mahādeva

This is the *dik-pāla* of Mathurā's western quarter. According to the *Skanda Purāṇa*, Kaṁsa worshiped Lord Śiva in this form as Bhūteśvara. Thus one can understand the antiquity of this *śiva-liṅga*. Beside the temple, stairs lead down to the temple of Paṭaleśvarī-devī, Lord Bhūteśvara's wife.

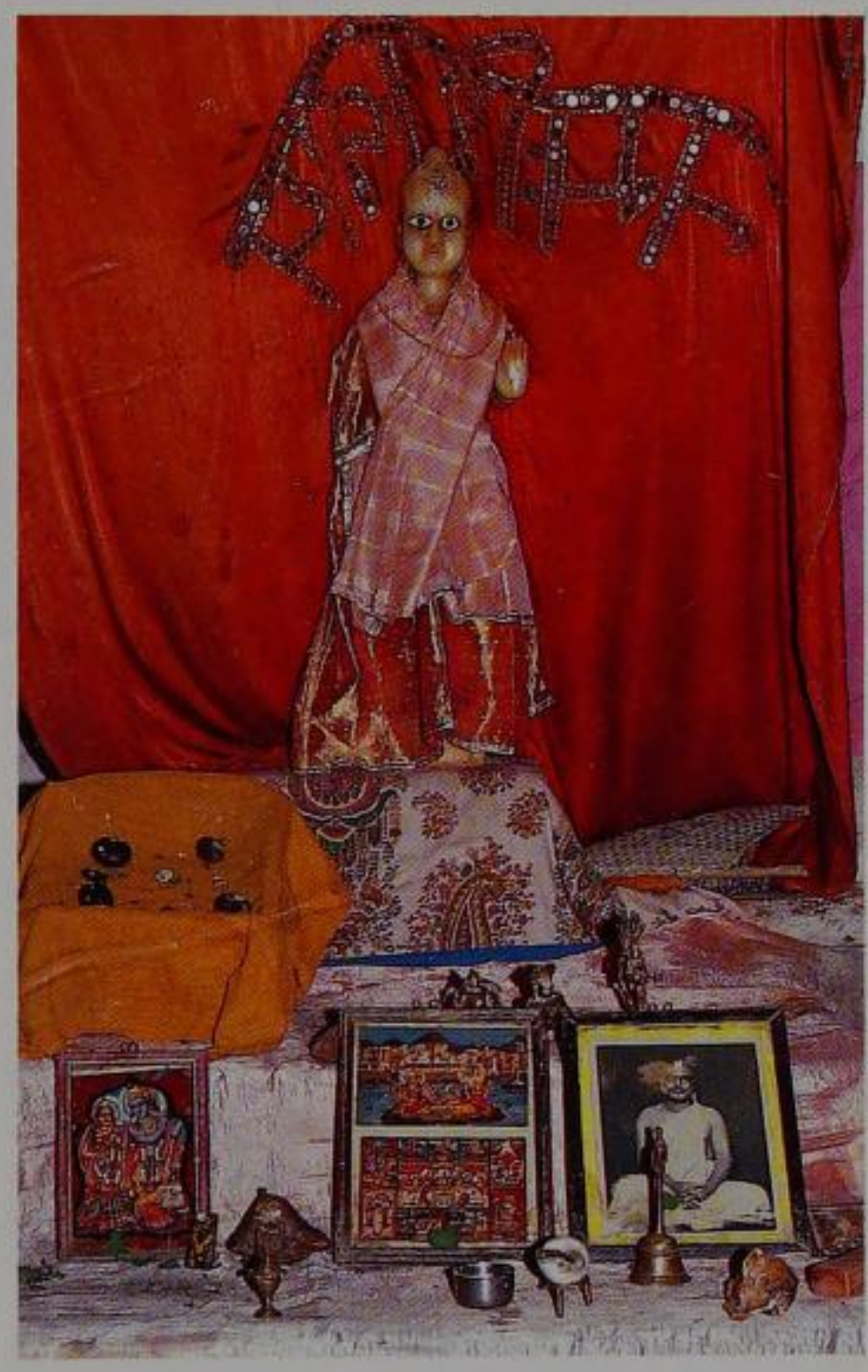


Dhruva Nārāyaṇa

Madhuvana

In the Satya-yuga Dhruva Mahārāja, at the tender age of five, performed great austerities within the forest here and received the *darśana* of Lord Viṣṇu in His form as Pṛṣnigarbha. Atop the hill known as Dhruva-tilā stands a small Viṣṇu temple with a Deity called Dhruva-Nārāyaṇa.

In the Tretā-yuga the *brāhmaṇas* of this area were being disturbed by Lavaṇāsura, the son of the demon Madhu, and thus they prayed to Lord Rāmacandra for help. He sent His brother Śatrughna, who killed



Lord Śatrughna, Lord Rāmacandra's brother

Lavaṇāsura and who established His capital here. A small Deity of Lord Śatrughna on the banks of Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa is said to date from the Tretā-yuga. (See Ādi-varāha)

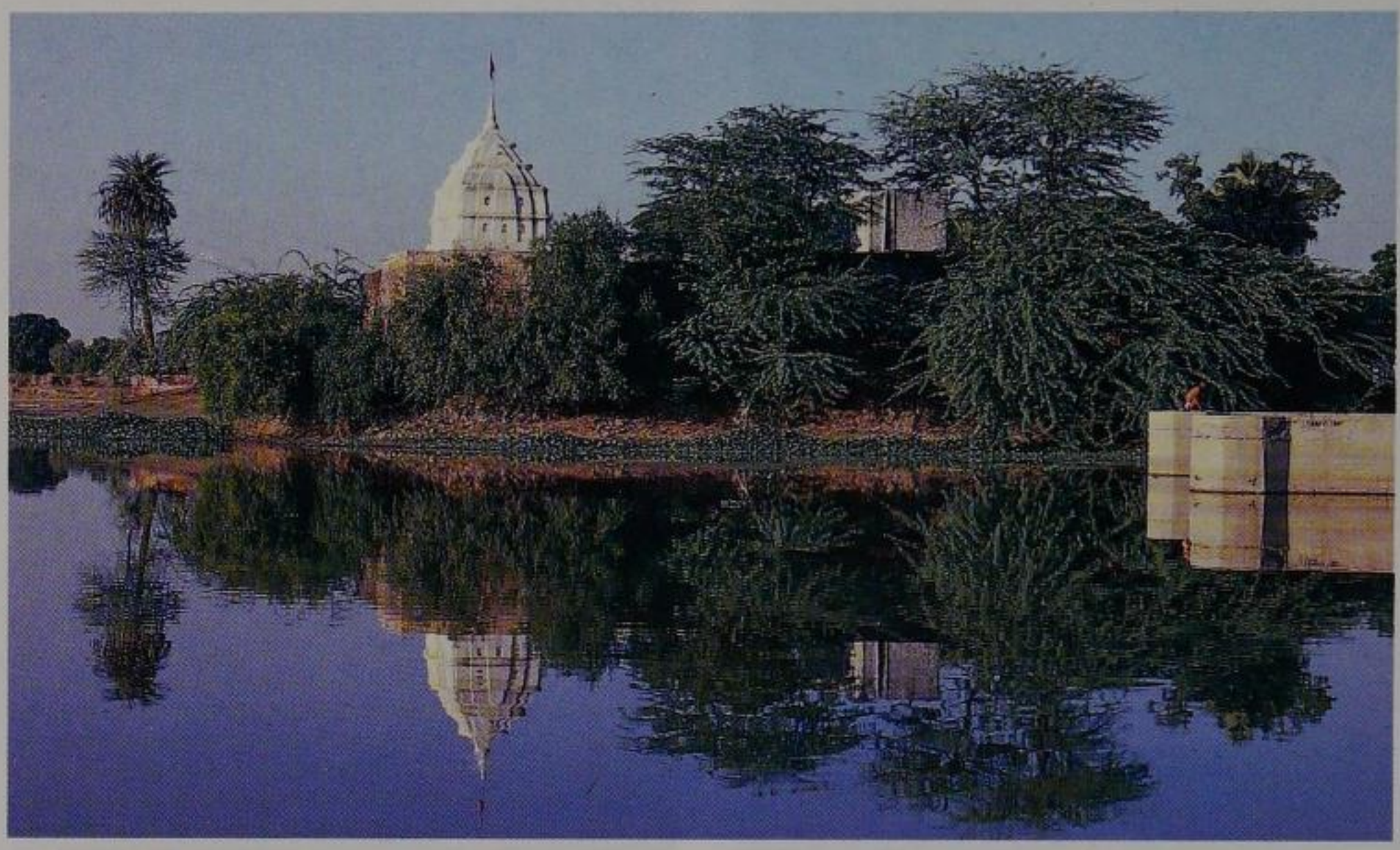
In the Dvāpara-yuga Kṛṣṇa would often come here to the banks of Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa to water His cows, and

in the autumn He would sometimes perform His *rāsa* dance here with the *gopīs*.

The residents of Madhuvana also know that in Kali-yuga Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu visited this forest. They are pleased to live in this sacred place, where the Lord performed transcendental pastimes in every *yuga*.

mon is present there in the form of an ass, and he is surrounded by similar demon friends who assume the same shape. All of them are very strong, so it is very difficult to approach this place. Dear brothers, You are the only persons who can kill such demons. . . .

"When Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa were thus petitioned by Their smiling, inti-

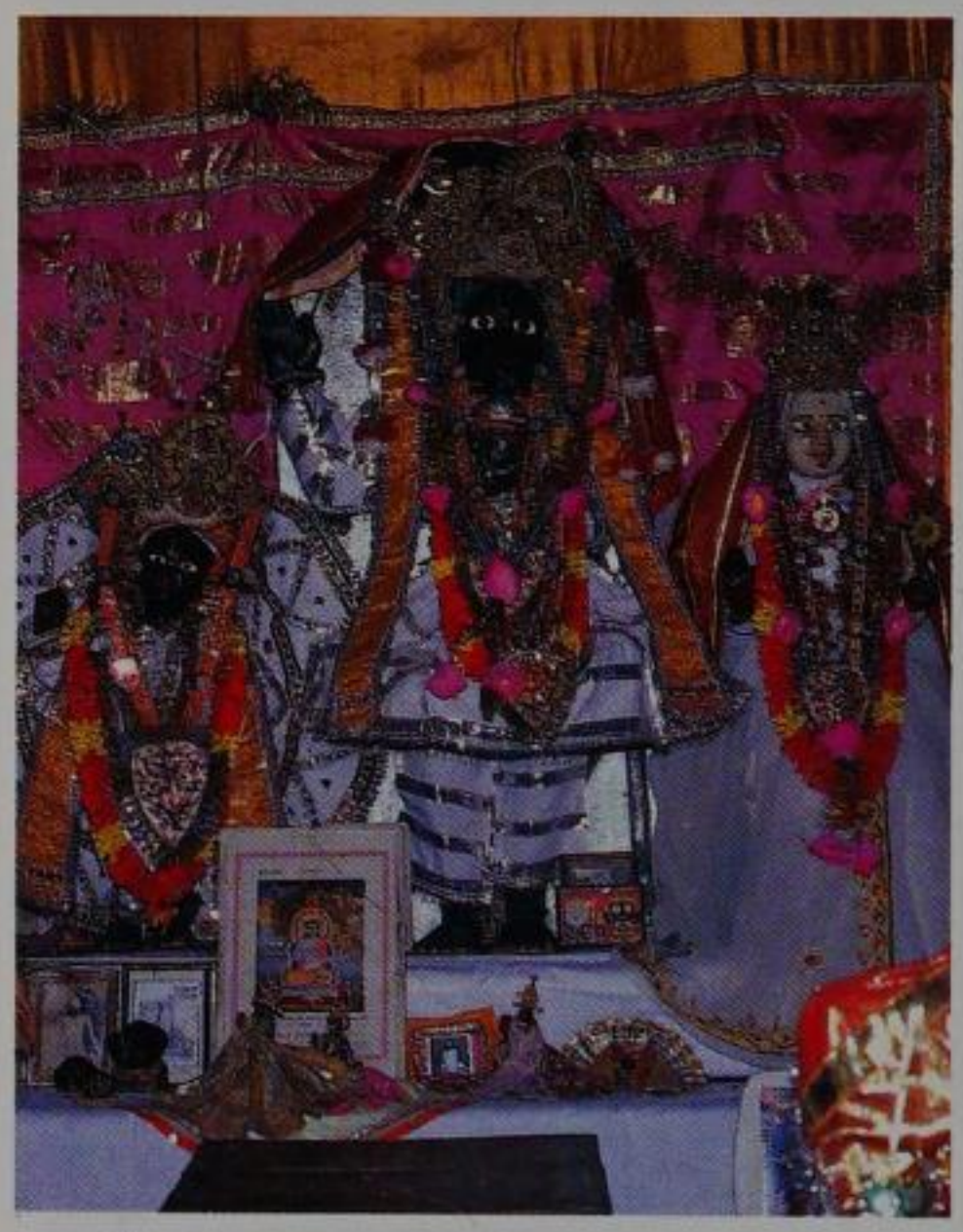


Talavana

Talavana

Here Lord Balarāma killed the demon Dhenukāsura. Now there is a small temple next to the lake, known as Saṅkarṣaṇa-kuṇḍa, with a beautiful Deity of Lord Balarāma.

"Dear Balarāma, You are very, very powerful. Your arms are very strong. Dear Kṛṣṇa, You are very expert in killing all kinds of disturbing demons. Will You kindly note that just near this place is a big forest of the name Talavana. This forest is full of palm trees, and all the trees are filled with fruits. Some are falling down, and some of them are very ripe, even in the trees. It is a very nice place, but because of a great demon, Dhenukāsura, it is very difficult to go there. No one can reach the trees to collect the fruits. Dear Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, this de-



Lord Balarāma with His wife Revatī and younger brother, Kṛṣṇa

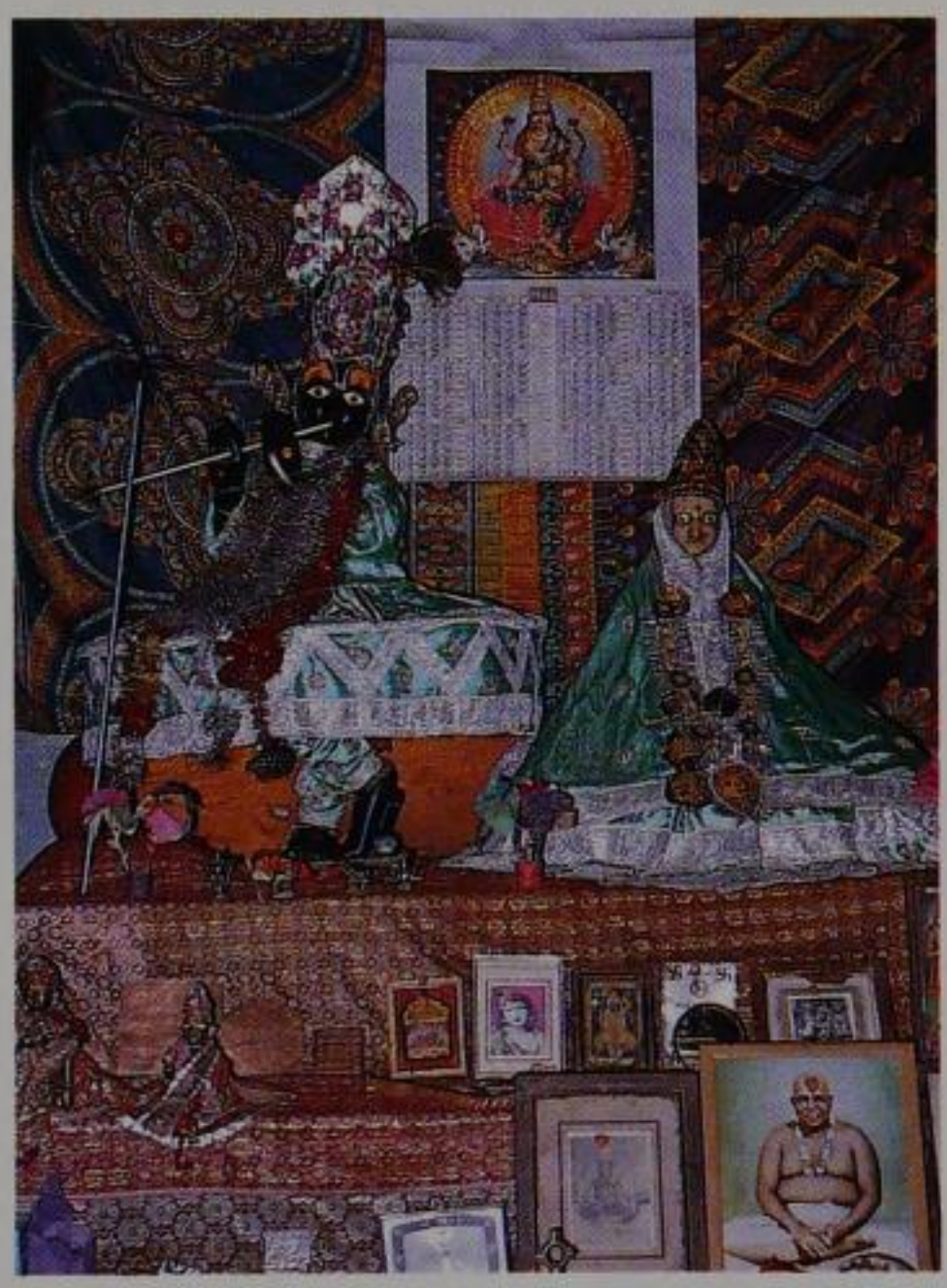
Kumudavana

mate friends, They were inclined to please them, and They began to proceed toward the forest, surrounded by all Their friends. Immediately upon entering the Talavana, Balarāma began to yank the trees with His arms, exhibiting the strength of an elephant. Because of this jerking, all the ripe fruits fell down on the ground. Upon hearing the sound of the falling fruits, the demon Dhenukāsura, who was living there in the form of an ass, began to move as if there were an earthquake. The demon appeared first before Balarāma and began to kick His chest with his hind legs. At first, Balarāma did not say anything, but the demon with great anger began to kick Him more vehemently. This time Balarāma immediately caught hold of the legs of the ass with one hand and, wheeling him around, threw him into the treetops. While he was being wheeled around by Balarāma, the demon lost his life" (*Kṛṣṇa*, p. 151).

"The splendor of Lord Balarāma's transcendental form eclipses many millions of glistening rising moons, and the slightest scent of His boundless strength is sufficient to destroy many armies of demons. Although He knows the supernatural power of His younger brother, Kṛṣṇa, still, out of love for Him, He never leaves Him alone in the forest even for a moment. I offer my prayers to Lord Balarāma, the enemy of Dhenukāsura" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 12).

Kumudavana

Kumuda refers to a water flower that formerly grew in abundance here. This is the smallest of the twelve main forests of Vraja. Kapila Muni performed penances and austerities on the banks of Padma-kuṇḍa many thousands of years ago. The *Varāha Purāṇa* states that whoever bathes in this *kuṇḍa* is blessed with understanding the purport of all Vedic literatures.



Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śantanvihārī

Śantanu-kuṇḍa

Mahārāja Śantanu performed austerities here to get a good son to

continue his dynasty. He later begot Bhīṣmadeva in the womb of his wife, Gaṅgā-devī. Bhīṣmadeva became a great general and the grandfather of the five Pāṇḍavas. Many couples come here to pray to the Deity for good progeny.

Deity of Bāhula

Bāhulavana

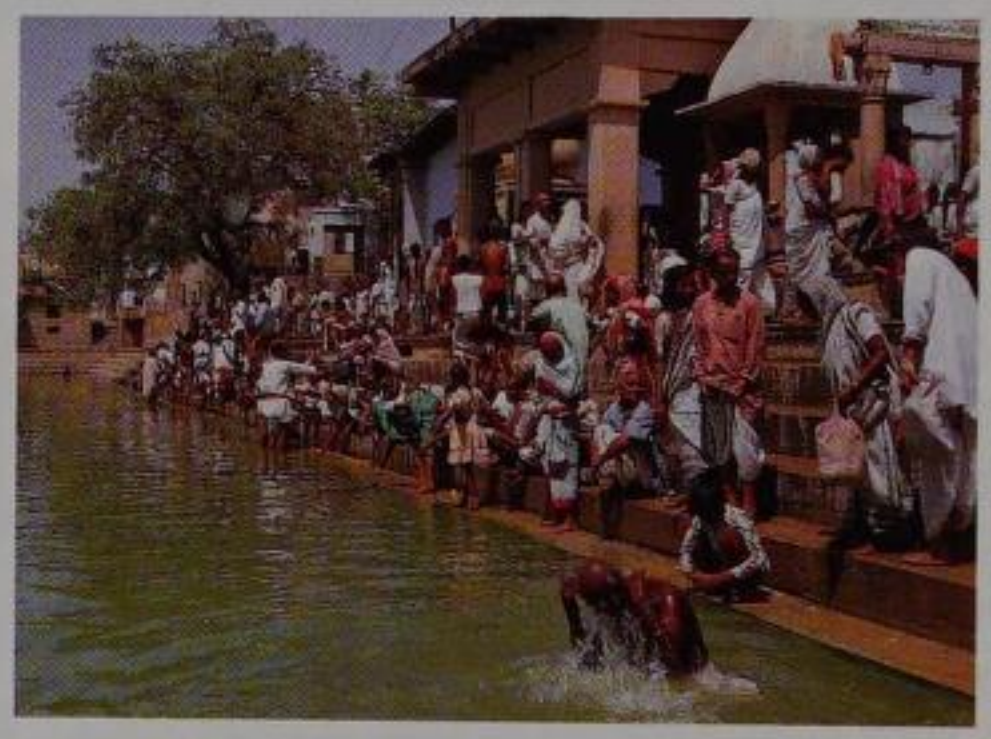
The *Padma Purāṇa* narates the following story: Dharmarāja once took the ferocious form of a lion and approached a cow named Bāhula to devour her for his meal. Bāhula pleaded that she first had to feed her little calf some milk and requested the lion for the opportunity to do so. She promised that she would return. The lion relented. Bāhula left to feed her calf and then returned only to find that Kṛṣṇa had appeared there and that the lion was really Dharmarāja. In the *Mathurā-māhātmya*, by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī, it is stated that she attained the post of Kṛṣṇa's wife for displaying the good quality of truthfulness.

The *Bhakti-ratnākara* mentions that Lord Nityānanda's pleasure potency, Jāhnavā-devī, visited the *kuṇḍa* here while performing Vraja-parikrama.

Rādhā-kuṇḍa

After killing the bull-demon, Ariṣṭāsura, Kṛṣṇa approached Rādhārāṇī to engage in conjugal affairs with Her, but She rebuked Him, stating that He was impure because of having committed the sin of killing a bull, the symbol of religion. She suggested that to counteract the sin He should bathe in all the sacred rivers. Kṛṣṇa, being very eager to engage in conjugal affairs with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, immediately shoved His lotus foot into the ground, making a large hole, and called all the sacred rivers to enter into it. They appeared before the Supreme Lord and formed Śyāma-kuṇḍa.

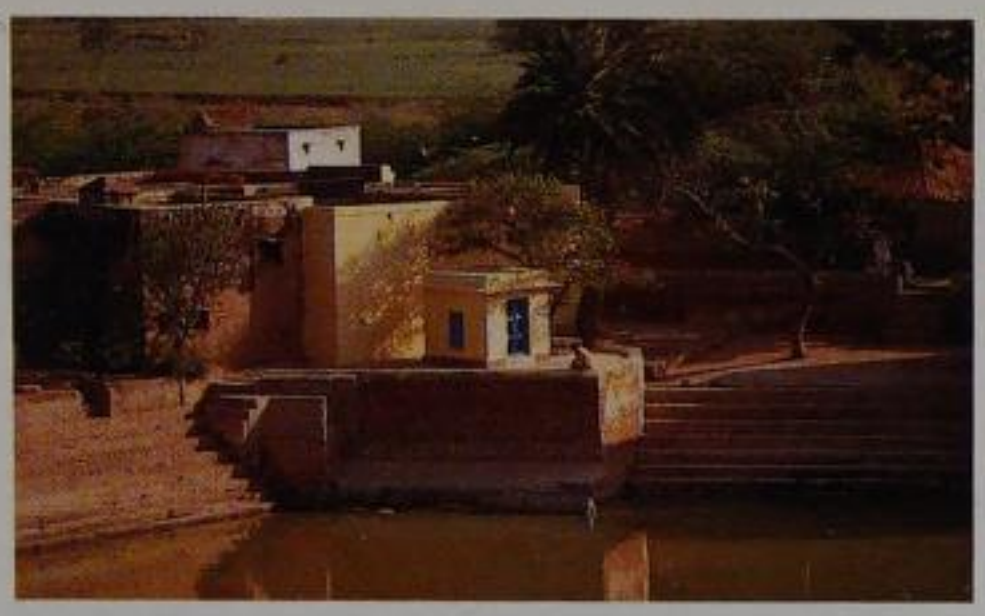
After bathing, Kṛṣṇa stated that He had become pure by bathing in Śyāma-kuṇḍa, but that the *gopīs* had become impure, having sided with a demon, even though he had been in the form of a bull. Rādhārāṇī, along with some of Her *gopī* friends, broke their bangels and dug a hole using the broken pieces. But there was no water, so Kṛṣṇa laughed. The *gopīs* then formed a line to the Mānasī Gaṅgā and started to fill the hole with water that was passed from one *gopī* to another. At that time all the sacred rivers arrived again in person, this



Rādhā-kuṇḍa

time requesting permission to enter into Rādhā's *kuṇḍa*, which they did after receiving Her blessings. *campu*).

Though Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu had ordered Rūpa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī to excavate the places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vṛndāvana, Lord Caitanya Himself discovered Rādhā-kuṇḍa, as mentioned in the *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*



Lord Caitanya's kuṭir at Rādhā-kuṇḍa

(*Madhya-līlā* 18.3–14). A small *mandira* on the banks of Śyāma-kuṇḍa contains His lotus footprints.

Pañca-pāṇḍavas

Many years after the manifest *līlā* (pastimes) of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī lived at Rādhā-kuṇḍa and desired to excavate the area, understanding that in the future many pilgrims would travel there. During this time a rich merchant named Sampanna went to Badarikāśrama for *darśana* of the Deity there. Kṛṣṇa appeared to Sampanna in a dream and told him to go to Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī to help him excavate Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

Sampanna did as Kṛṣṇa had ordered, and excavation began. Rādhā-kuṇḍa was completed first; then work began on Śyāma-kuṇḍa. One night, however, Yudhiṣṭhira Mahārāja appeared to Raghunātha dāsa in a dream and requested him not to cut down the trees on the banks of Śyāma-kuṇḍa, because he and his four brothers were there as trees, performing *bhajana*. Of course, the trees were not cut, and for this reason Śyāma-kuṇḍa has an irregular shape.

Tongue of Govardhana

Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was once having a well dug because the water of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa is very sacred and he didn't want to use it for his bodily necessities. While digging, one of the workers struck a stone that started to bleed! Immediately Raghunātha ordered the digging to stop. That evening Kṛṣṇa appeared to him in a dream, informing him that the worker had struck the tongue of Govardhana. The Lord told Raghunātha to excavate the *śilā* (sacred stone) and installed it in a temple. The temple that now houses the *śilā* stands next to the Rādhā Govinda Mandira of Rādhā-kuṇḍa.

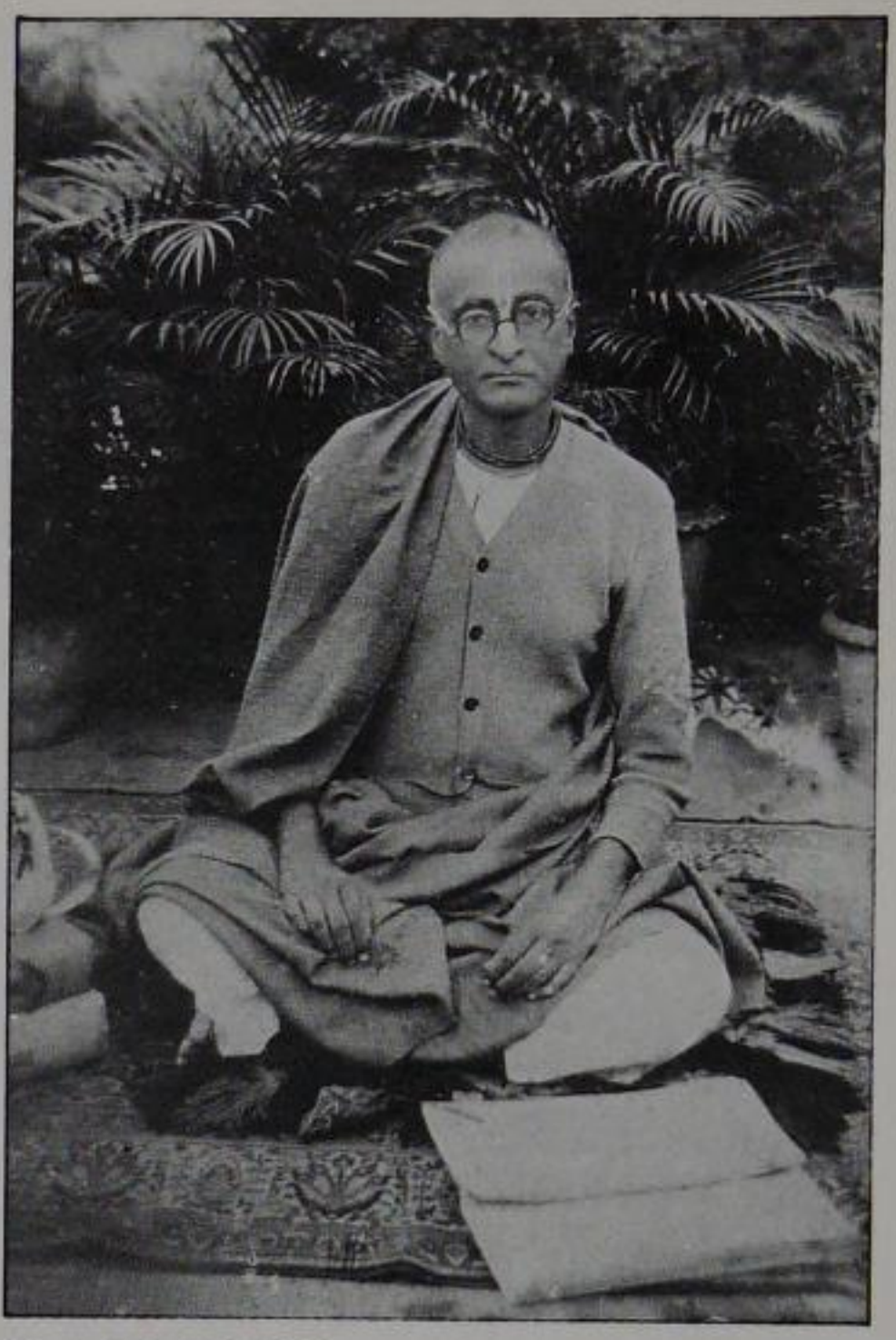
Tongue of Govardhana

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's Bhajana-kuṭir

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura lived at several different places during his life (1838–1914), including Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Those who have some knowledge of Gauḍīya history and philosophy know well that he was a powerful exponent of Vaiṣṇavism who saved the true teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu from being perverted by the *sahajiyā sampradāyas*. He and his son, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, preached strongly against persons who imitate the activities of *paramahaṁsas* by wearing the dress of a *bābājī* and chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa in a solitary place while still absorbed in material thoughts and desires.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī also lived at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, and some of his belongings are still here, including his cane, shoes, and bed. *Puṣpa-samādhis* of both these great souls are located at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, and

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura



Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura

here Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī instructed Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, "If you ever get money, print books."

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written, "The banks of Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa are made of billions of conscious, ecstatic, desire-fulfilling touchstones, and surrounding the *kuṇḍa* are hundreds and hundreds of beautiful transcendental gardens made of coral and rubies. The trees in those gardens produce diamonds and pearls, their branches bending under the weight of millions of these lovely gems.

"My cottage is shining beautifully within that most enchanting garden called Svānanda-sukhada-kuñja. Living there I will sing Kṛṣṇa's holy name, and I will greedily hanker for the time when I will get the service of Him and His associates" (*Gītā-mālā*).

The shoes and cane of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in his cottage at Rādhā-kuṇḍa

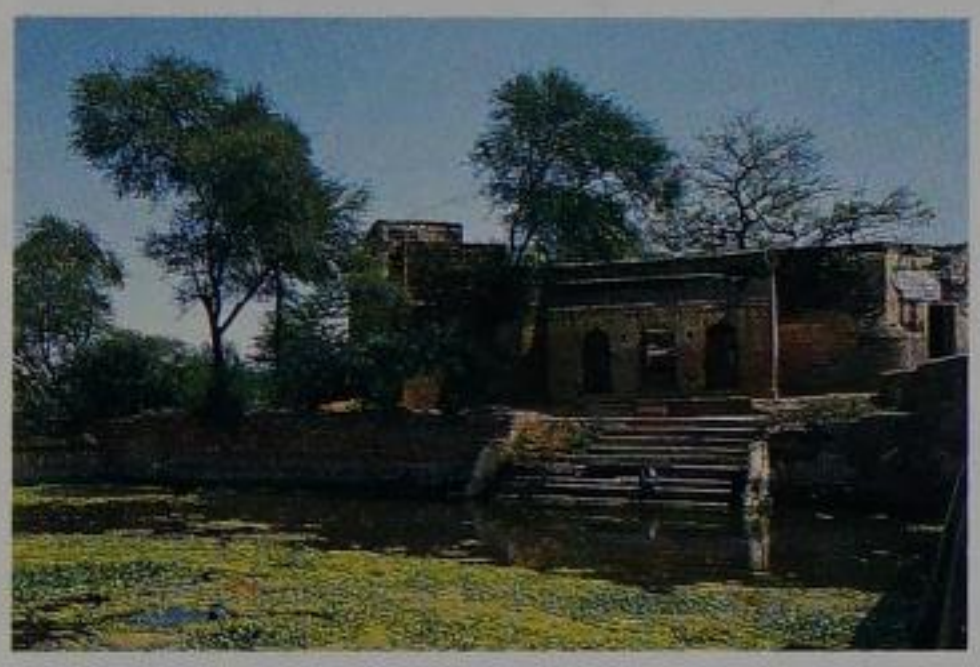
Rādhā-kuñjabihārī Gauḍīya Maṭha

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī established sixty-four temples throughout the subcontinent of India. In 1935 he founded this temple at Rādhā-kuṇḍa, containing the Deities of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Lord Caitanya. Next to the temple is a *puṣpa-samādhi* of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta's spiritual master, Śrīla Gaura-kiśora dāsa Bābājī.

Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kuñjabihārī

Lalitā-kuṇḍa

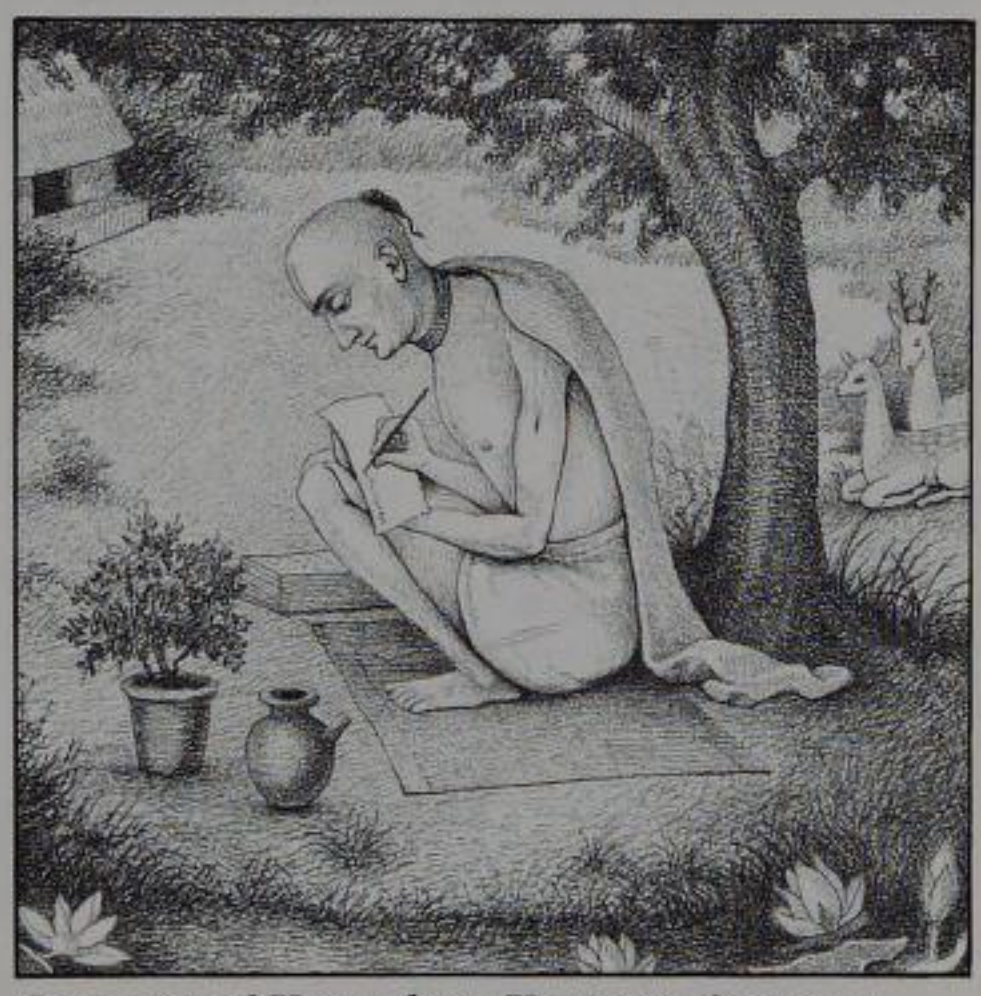
Surrounding Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa are the *kuṇḍas* of the eight main assistants of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Kṛṣṇa. The only one of these *kuṇḍas* manifest now is Lalitā-kuṇḍa. Jīva Gosvāmī's *bhajana-kuṭir* is near this *kuṇḍa*.



Lalitā-kuṇḍa

Gopī-kūpa

This is the well dug by the order of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī. Just across the *parikrama* path is the place where Mādhavendra Purī sat when he visited Rādhā-kuṇḍa.



Drawing of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī

Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

"Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was most probably born in the year 1416 *śakābda* [A.D. 1494] in a *kāyastha* family as the son of Govardhana Majumdār, who was the younger brother of the then Zamīndār Hiraṇya Majumdār. The village where he took birth is known as Śrī

Gopī-kūpa

Kṛṣṇapura. . . . The forefathers of Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī were all Vaiṣṇavas and were very rich men. His spiritual master at home was Yadunandana Ācārya. Although Raghunātha dāsa was a family man, he had no attachment for his estate and wife. Seeing his tendency to leave home, his father and uncle engaged special bodyguards to watch over him, but nevertheless he managed to escape their vigilance and went away to Jagannātha Purī to meet Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. This incident took place in the year 1439 *śakābda* [A.D. 1517]. Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī compiled three books, named *Stava-mālā* or *Stavāvalī* [a section of this book is entitled *Vraja-vilāsa-stava*], *Dāna-carita* [*Dāna-keli-cintāmaṇi*] and *Mukta-carita*. He lived for a long duration of life. For most of his life he resided at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. The place where Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī performed his devotional service still exists by Rādhā-kuṇḍa. He almost completely gave up eating, and therefore he was very skinny and of weak health. His only concern was to chant the holy name of the Lord. He gradually reduced his sleeping until he was almost not sleeping at all. It is said that his eyes were always full of tears. When Śrīnivāsa Ācārya went to see Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, the Gosvāmī blessed him by embracing

This famous Bengali painting shows Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī taking water from Śyāma-kuṇḍa while Kṛṣṇa protects him from tigers. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī stands nearby.

him. Śrīnivāsa Ācārya requested his blessings for preaching in Bengal, and Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī granted them. In the *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* (186) it is stated that Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was formerly the *gopī* named Rasa-mañjarī. Sometimes it is said that he was Rati-mañjarī" (Cc. *Ādi* 10.91, purport).

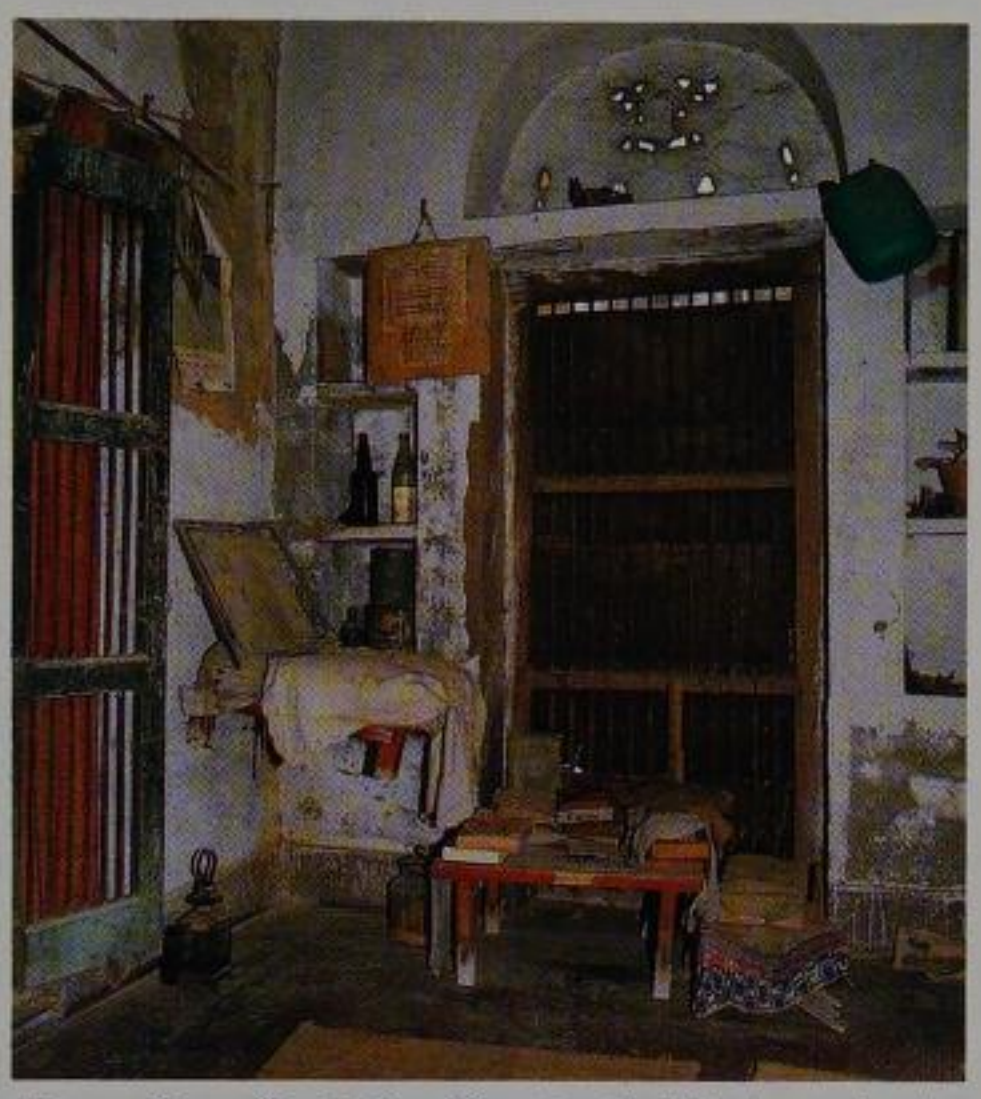
"Filled with many *campaka* trees, beautiful young *aśoka* trees, mango

trees, *keśa-nagara* trees, *bakula* trees, *lavaṅga* creepers, and *mādhavī* creepers, the area around Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa is very beautiful and pleasing to the heart, and it is the favorite pastime place of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa. Let me take shelter of these two lakes, Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa. The delightful forest of Vṛndāvana, beautiful Govardhana Hill, and the nectarean arena of the *rāsa* dance, what to speak of other places, are not equal to even a single particle of one of the atoms of Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa. Let me take shelter of these two lakes, which are more dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa than His own life's breath.

"By the shore of Rādhā-kuṇḍa is a grand pavilion made of gold, pearls, and precious gems. In that pavilion, Śrī Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, considering everything else unimportant, enjoy transcendental pastimes as the two prime ministers of the deity of transcendental love, and They happily anoint that kingdom of love with the sandal paste of Their pastimes. I eternally worship this splendid grove by the shore of Rādhā-kuṇḍa" *(Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 52–54).

Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī

"Raghunātha Bhaṭṭācārya, or Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, one of the six Gosvāmīs, was the son of Tapana Miśra. Born in approximately 1425 *śakābda* [A.D. 1503], he was expert in reciting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. It is said that he was also expert in cooking; whatever he cooked would be nectarean. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was greatly pleased to accept the foodstuffs that he cooked, and Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa used to take the remnants of foodstuffs left by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa lived for eight months in Jagannātha Purī, after which Lord Caitanya ordered him to go to Vṛndāvana to join Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu asked Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa not to marry but to remain a *brahmacārī*, and He also ordered him to read *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* constantly. Thus, he went to Vṛndāvana, where he engaged in reciting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* to Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. He was so expert in reciting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* that he would recite each and every verse in three melodious tunes. While Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī was living with Śrī Caitanya Mahā-



Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī's bhajana-kuṭir

prabhu, the Lord blessed him by offering him betel nuts offered to the Jagannātha Deity and a garland of *tulasī* said to be as long as fourteen cubits. The Govinda temple was constructed by Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī's order to one of his disciples. Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī supplied all the ornaments of the Govinda Deity. He never talked of nonsense or worldly matters but always engaged in hearing about Kṛṣṇa twenty-four hours a day. He never cared to hear blasphemy of a Vaiṣṇava. Even when there were points to be criticized, he used to say that since all the Vaiṣṇavas were engaged in the service of the Lord, he did not mind their faults. Later Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī lived by Rādhā-kuṇḍa in a small cottage. His

samādhi, along with those of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī (who compiled *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* at Rādhā-kuṇḍa) and Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, are all located together on the banks of Rādhā-kuṇḍa. All three devotees left this world on the twelfth day of the waxing moon (Dvādaśī) during the month of Kārttika, although in different years. In the *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā*, verse 185, it is said that Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī was formerly the *gopī* named Rāga-mañjarī" (Cc. *Ādi* 10.158).

Kusuma-sarovara

It is said that Rādhārāṇī along with some of Her *gopī* friends used to pick flowers (*kusuma*) here before going to Rādhā-kuṇḍa to meet Kṛṣṇa. During Lord Caitanya's time it was known as Sumanas Lake.

A deity of Uddhava installed by Kṛṣṇa's great-grandson

Kusuma-sarovara

Next to Kusuma-sarovara stands a small temple with a deity of Uddhava, who is remaining here in the form of grass. He prayed, "The *gopīs* of Vṛndāvana have given up the association of their husbands, sons and other family members, who are very difficult to give up, and they have forsaken the path of chastity to take shelter of the lotus feet of Mukunda, Kṛṣṇa, which one should search for by Vedic knowledge. Oh, let me be fortunate enough to be one of the bushes, creepers, or herbs in Vṛndāvana, because the *gopīs* trample them and bless them with the dust of their lotus feet" (*Bhāg.* 10.47.61).

Also on the banks of Kusuma-sarovara is Aśoka-latā, a *kuñja* (grove) where Kṛṣṇa rendered service to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī by braiding Her hair. Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has vividly described this pastime in his *Govinda-līlāmṛta*.

Nārada-vana

Near Kusuma-sarovara is Nārada-vana, where Nārada Muni wrote the *Nārada-bhakti sūtras*. Nārada desired to witness the conjugal pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa at Śrī Rādhā-kuṇḍa but was not allowed to because he has a male body. Being blessed by Vṛndā-devī, he took on a female form after bathing in Kusuma-sarovara and thus

witnessed the most confidential pastimes of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa at Rādhā-kuṇḍa. Lord Kṛṣṇa then told him to write about the glories of *bhakti*, devotional service.

The deity of Nārada Muni at Nārada-vana

Govardhana Hill

In Satya-yuga a sage named Pulastya Muni approached the king of mountains, Droṇācala, and asked him for his son, Govardhana. Droṇācala was grief-stricken and started to weep, pleading with the sage that he couldn't bear separation from Govardhana. The *muni* became furious and was just about to curse Droṇācala when Govardhana spoke up. He declared that he would go with the sage under the condition that wherever he was put down, there he would remain.

Pulastya Muni then took Govardhana and started for his *āśrama,* but while passing through Vraja-maṇḍala he placed Govardhana down to answer the call of nature. He then bathed, and upon returning found he couldn't move Govardhana. He became angry and cursed the hill to shrink the size of one mustard seed every day until he disappeared. Govardhana Hill was very high, but at present the hill measures only about eighty feet at its highest point.

In Dvāpara-yuga, during the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the cowherd men of Vṛndāvana were preparing a sacrifice to Lord Indra, the king of heaven, who is responsible for rain. Kṛṣṇa, however, convinced them to stop this sacrifice and instead worship Govardhana Hill because it was supplying so many necessities of life.

When the cowherd men agreed and started their worship of Govardhana Hill, King Indra was overcome by envy and sent torrents of rain upon Vṛndāvana. The residents of Vraja approached Lord Kṛṣṇa for help. He then lifted the entire mountain and used it as an umbrella. Child Kṛṣṇa held the hill upon the small finger of His left hand for seven days and saved the residents of Vṛndāvana from the wrath of King Indra.

"May the left arm of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, whose eyes are like the petals of a lotus flower, always protect you. With His left arm He raised Govardhana Hill as if it were a toy" (*Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 2.1.62).

Govardhana Hill

Sanātana Gosvāmī used to circumambulate Govardhana Hill—a total of twenty-one kilometers—as a daily spiritual practice. In the *Govinda-līlāmṛta,* Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī states that Govardhana Hill is shaped like a peacock, with Rādhā-kuṇḍa and Śyāma-kuṇḍa as the eyes. In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam,* the *gopīs* state, "Of all the devotees, this Govardhana Hill is the best! O my friends, this hill supplies Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, as well as Their calves, cows and cowherd friends, with all kinds of necessities—water for drinking, very soft grass, caves, fruits,

Kṛṣṇa lifts Govardhana Hill to protect the inhabitants of Vrndāvana from torrential rains.

flowers and vegetables. In this way the hill offers respect to the Lord. Being touched by the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, Govardhana Hill appears very jubilant" (*Bhāg.* 10.21.18).

Mānasī Gaṅgā

In the *Mathurā-māhātmya* it is advised that one should first bathe in the Mānasī Gaṅgā and then take *darśana* of Harideva before starting Govardhana-parikrama.

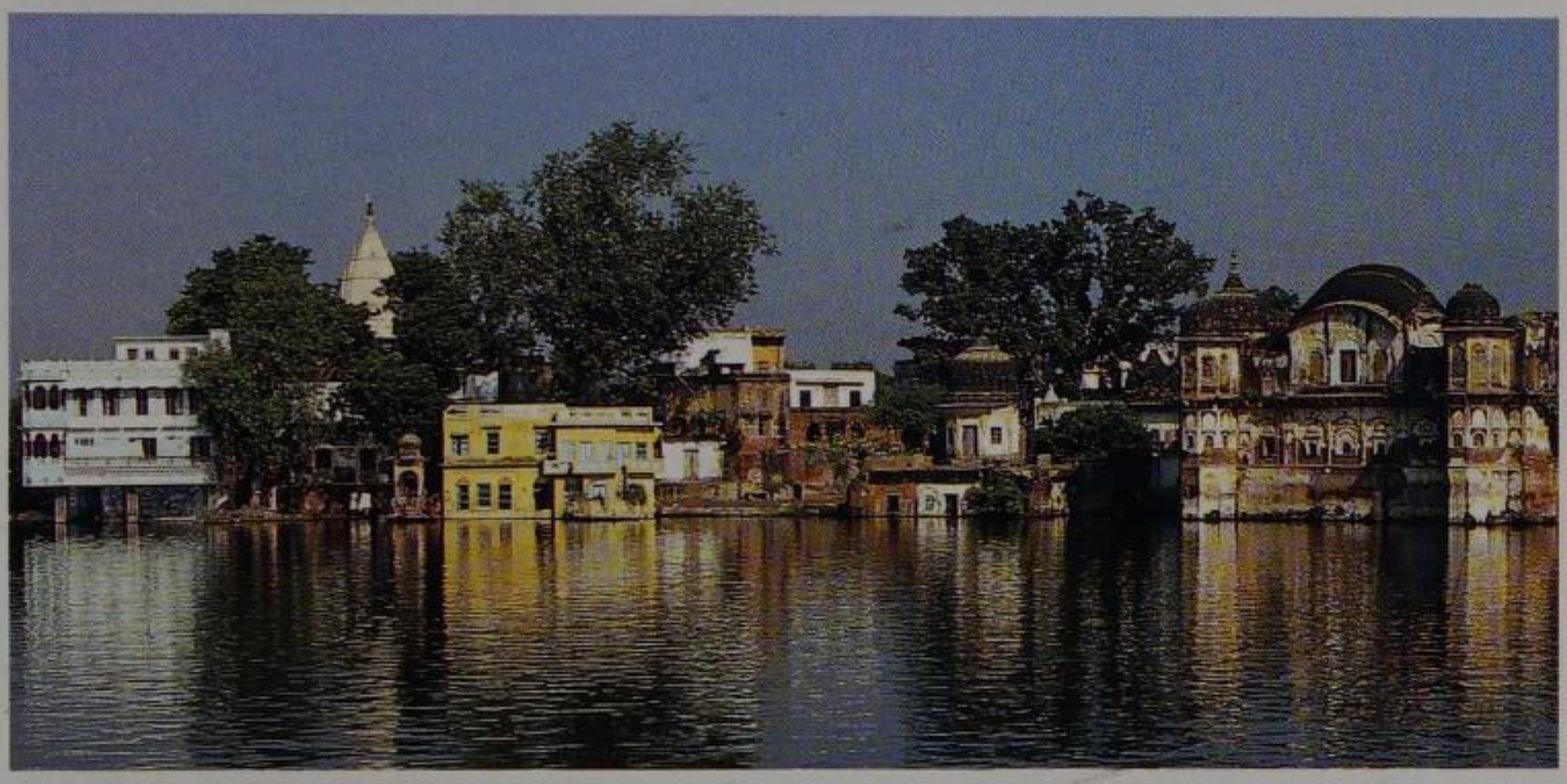
After Kṛṣṇa had killed Vatsāsura, the demon who took the form of a calf, His friends told Him that He would have to bathe in the Ganges for purification. Not wanting to travel such a long distance, Kṛṣṇa, by His meditation (*manas* means "mind"), brought the Ganges here and bathed.

On another occasion the residents of Vraja were planning to travel on pilgrimage to the Ganges to take a sacred bath. On hearing this, Kṛṣṇa took them to Mānasī Gaṅgā and informed them that the Ganges was already manifest in Vraja; they wouldn't have to travel at all. Gaṅgādevī then appeared, seated on her crocodile carrier. A Mānasī Gaṅgā Mandira now adorns the northern bank.

"I offer my humble obeisances unto the lake called Mānasī Gaṅgā. This lake is enjoying the pleasure cruise of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, who are floating on its waters in a boat. Out of joy the Mānasī Gaṅgā is tossing to and fro the splendid Govardhana pebbles on the shore. May this sacred Mānasī Gaṅgā always give me shelter" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 64).

Cakaleśvara

This is another of the *śiva-liṅgas* installed by Kṛṣṇa's great-grandson Vajranābha. Sanātana Gosvāmī used to perform his *bhajana* next to this temple, and a small *bhajana-kuṭir* has been constructed to mark the spot. Because of mosquitoes, Sanātana was thinking of moving from the area, but Lord Śiva (Cakaleśvara) came to him



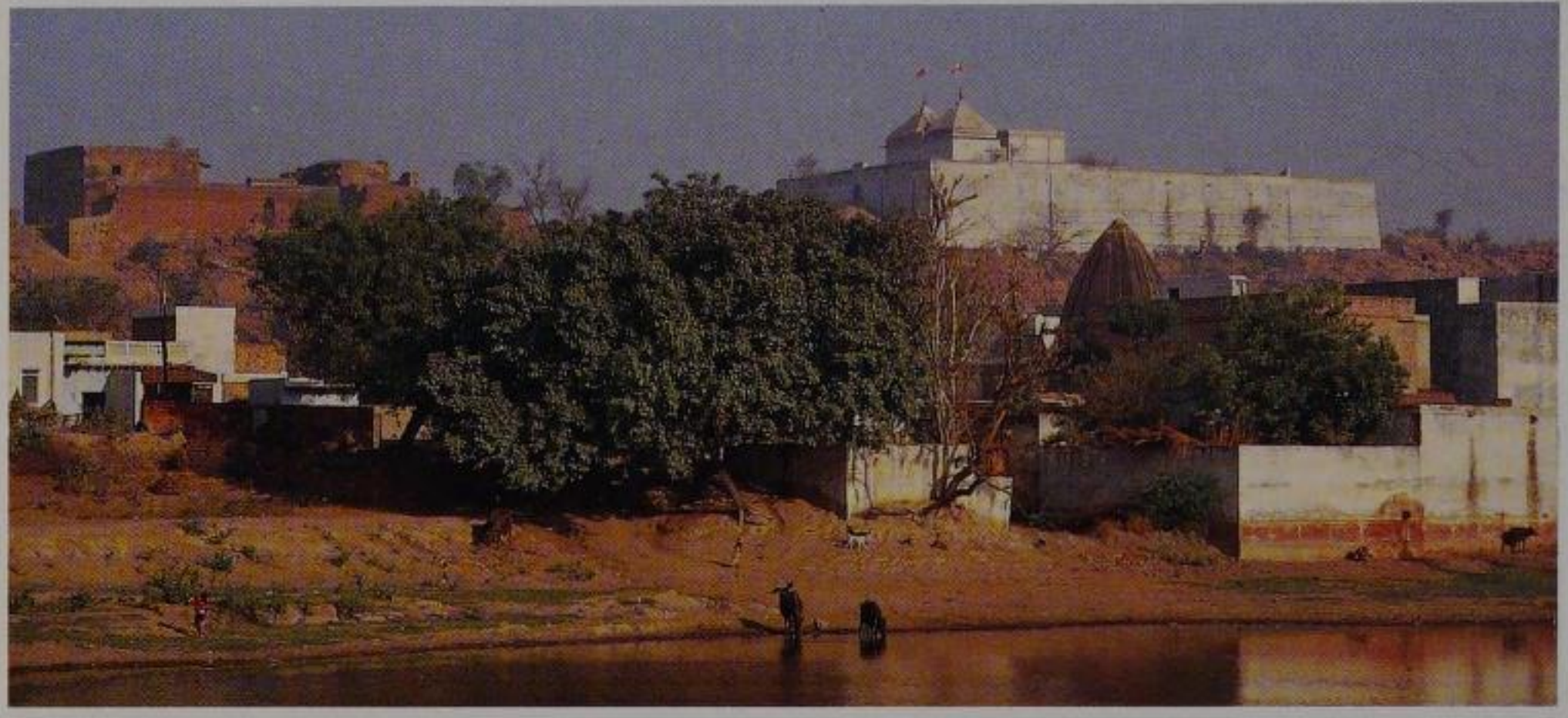
Mānasī Gaṅgā

Cakaleśvara

disguised as a *brāhmaṇa* and informed him that the mosquitoes would no longer disturb him. Local inhabitants claim that even to this day the place is mostly free from mosquitoes.

Aniyora

Aniyora is the first village after Govardhana on the *parikrama* trail.



Aniyora

"It is here that all the *gopīs* and the *gopas* enjoyed wonderful pastimes with Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Therefore this place is also called Aniyora. The Annakūṭa ceremony was celebrated here. O Śrīnivāsa, whoever sees this place has all his desires fulfilled" (*Bhakti-ratnākara,* Fifth Wave).

"When Vraja's king offered a great quantity of foodstuff to Govardhana Hill, Kṛṣṇa, the enemy of Aghāsura, assumed a gigantic form, proclaimed that He was actually Govardhana Hill, invited everyone to ask boons from Him, and, fooling even Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, ate all the offered food. Let me take shelter of the Annakūṭa festival, where Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoyed these pastimes" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 75).

Govinda-kuṇḍa

This *kuṇḍa* is situated just outside Aniyora. "According to some, Queen Padmāvatī excavated this lake. In the *Bhakti-ratnākara* (Fifth Wave), the following statement is found:

'Govinda-kuṇḍa is exalted for its many spiritual activities. It was here that Indra was defeated by Lord Kṛṣṇa, and Indra offered his prayers and bathed Lord Govinda.' In the *Mathurā-khaṇḍa* it is also stated: 'Simply by bathing in Govinda-kuṇḍa, one is awarded liberation. This lake was produced when Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa was bathed by Lord Indra' " (Cc. *Madhya* 18.37, purport).

"Humbled by great fear, Indra, the king of the demigods, grasped Lord Kṛṣṇa's lotus feet and, accompanied by a *surabhi* cow, performed the coronation festival of bathing them with the water of the celestial Ganges. In this way Lord Kṛṣṇa's kingship over the cows became splendidly manifest. I pray that Govinda-kuṇḍa, the lake created by that ceremonial bath, may eternally appear before my eyes" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 74).

"Once Śrī Mādhavendra Purī traveled to Vṛndāvana, where he came upon the hill known as Govardhana. Mādhavendra Purī was almost mad in his ecstasy of love of Godhead, and he did not know whether it was day or night. Sometimes he stood up, and sometimes he fell to the ground. He could not discriminate whether he was in a proper place or not. After circumambulating the hill, Mādhavendra Purī went to Govinda-

kuṇḍa and took his bath. He then sat beneath a tree to take his evening rest.

"While he was sitting beneath a tree, an unknown cowherd boy came with a pot of milk, placed it before Mādhavendra Purī, and, smiling, addressed him as follows, 'Please drink the milk I have brought. Why don't you beg some food to eat? What kind of meditation are you undergoing?'

"When he saw the beauty of that boy, Mādhavendra Purī became very satisfied. Hearing His sweet words, he forgot all hunger and thirst.

"Mādhavendra Purī said, 'Who are You? Where do You reside? And how did You know that I was fasting?'

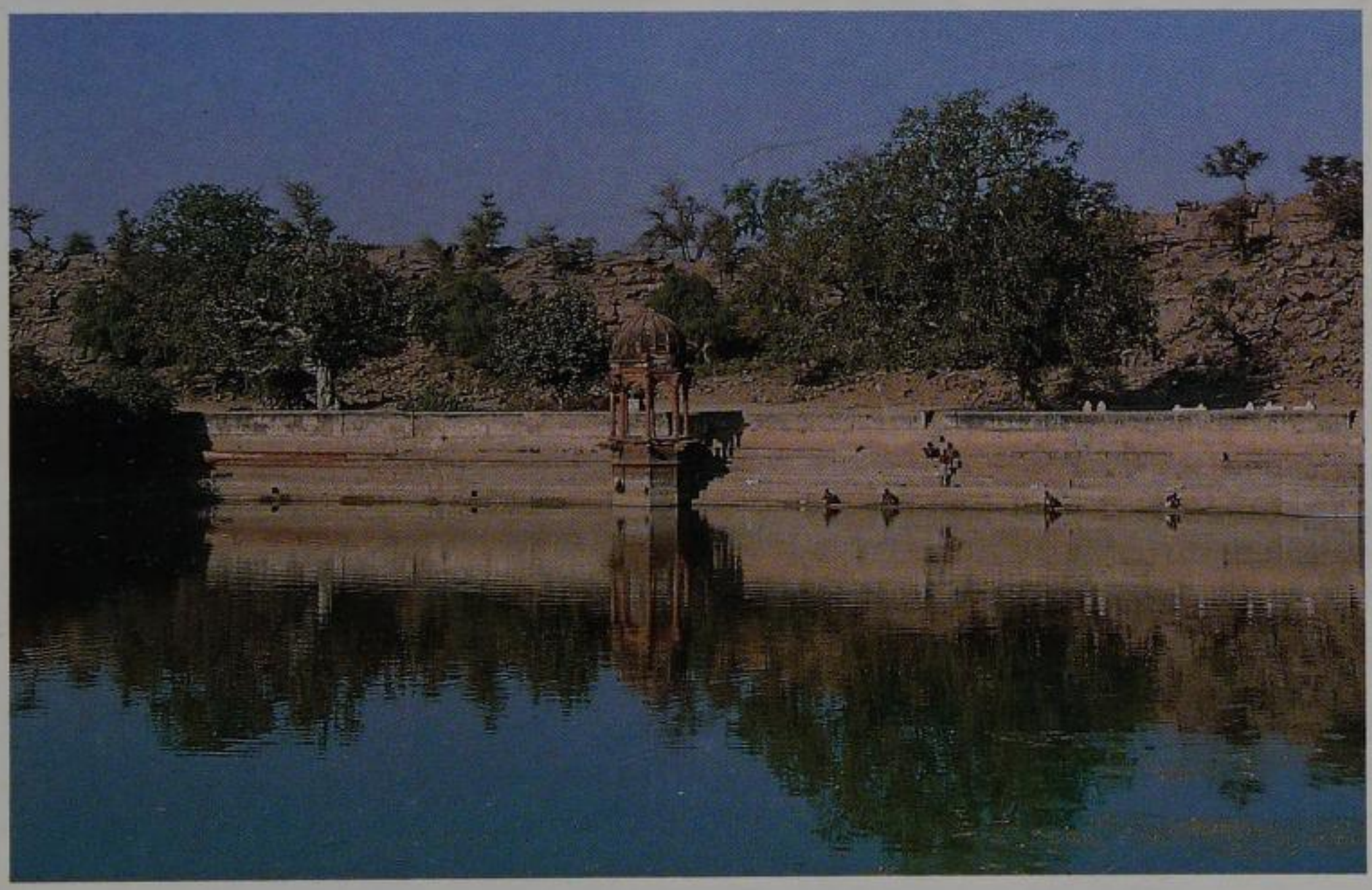
"The boy replied, 'Sir, I am a cowherd boy, and I reside in this village. In My village, no one fasts. In this village a person can beg food from others and thus eat. Some people drink only milk, but if a person does not ask anyone for food, I supply him all his eatables. The women who come here to take water saw you, and they supplied Me with this milk and sent Me to you. I must go very soon to milk the cows, but I shall return and take back this milk pot from you.'

"Saying this, the boy left the place. Indeed, He suddenly could be seen no more, and Mādhavendra Purī's heart was filled with wonder.

"After drinking the milk, Mādhavendra Purī washed the pot and put it aside. He looked toward the path, but the boy never returned. Mādhavendra Purī could not sleep. He sat and chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra,* and at the end of the night he dozed a little, and his external activities stopped. In a dream Mādhavendra Purī saw the very same boy.

"The boy came before him and, holding his hand, took him to a bush in the jungle. The boy showed Mādhavendra Purī the bush and said, 'I reside in this bush, and because of this I suffer very much from severe cold, rain showers, winds, and scorching heat. Please bring the people of the village and get them to take Me out of this bush. Then have them situate Me nicely on top of the hill.'

" 'Please construct a temple on the top of that hill,' the boy continued, 'and install Me in that temple. After this, wash Me with large quantities of



Govinda-kuṇḍa

Śrī Nāthajī

cold water so that My body may be cleansed. For many days I have been observing you, and I have been wondering, "When will Mādhavendra Purī come here to serve Me?" I have accepted your service due to your ecstatic love for Me. Thus I shall appear, and by My audience all fallen souls will be delivered. My name is Gopāla. I am the lifter of Govardhana Hill. I was installed by Vajranābha, and here I am the authority. When the Mohammedans attacked, the priest who was serving Me hid Me in this bush in the jungle. Then he ran away out of fear of the attack. Since the priest went away, I have been staying in this bush. It is very good that you have come here. Now just remove Me with care' " (Cc. *Madhya* 4.21–43).

After this, Mādhavendra Purī got help from the local villagers, excavated the Deity from the nearby jungle, and held a grand installation for Gopāla. The remains of this original temple can still be seen on top of Govardhana Hill. Gopāla is now situated in Nāthdvāra, a town in Rajasthan, and is famous as Śrī Nāthajī.

Paitha

A short distance from Govinda-kuṇḍa, but off the *parikrama* trail, is the place where Kṛṣṇa hid from the *gopīs* during the *rāsa* dance.

"Once Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, with a playful motive, manifested Himself as Nārāyaṇa with four victorious hands and a very beautiful form. Seeing this exalted form, however, crippled the ecstatic feelings of the *gopīs.* A learned scholar, therefore, cannot understand the *gopīs'* ecstatic feelings, which are firmly fixed upon the original form of Lord Kṛṣṇa as the son of Nanda Mahārāja. The wonderful feelings of the *gopīs* in ecstatic *parama-rasa* with Kṛṣṇa are the greatest mystery in spiritual life" (*Lalitā-mādhava* 6.14).

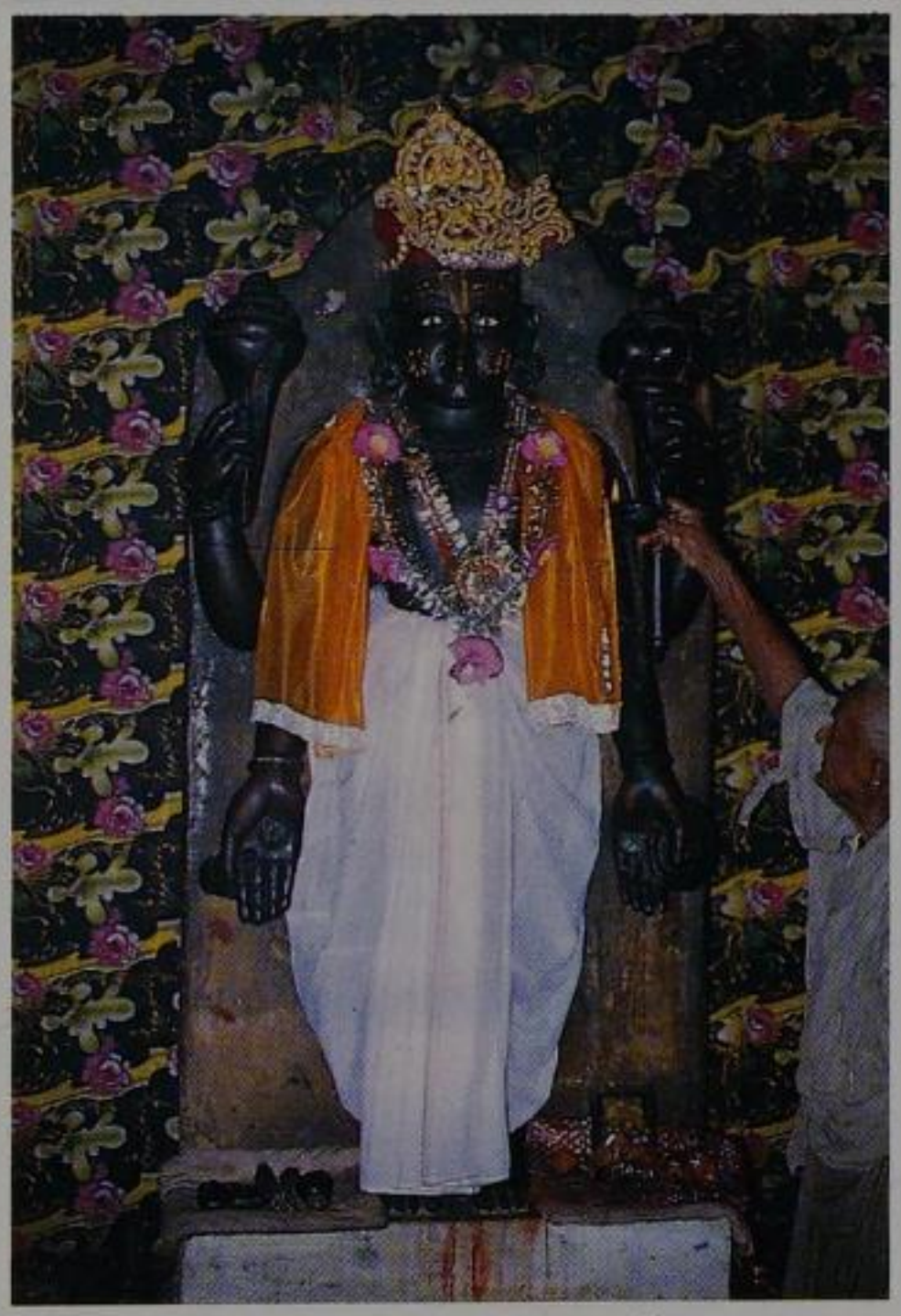
"During the season of springtime, when the *rāsa* dance was going on, suddenly Kṛṣṇa disappeared from the scene, indicating that He wanted to be alone with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Kṛṣṇa was sitting in a solitary bush, waiting for Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī to pass by. But while He was searching, the *gopīs* arrived there, like a phalanx of soldiers. 'Just see!' the *gopīs* said, seeing Kṛṣṇa from a distant place. 'Here within a bush is Kṛṣṇa, the son of Nanda Mahārāja.' As soon as Kṛṣṇa saw all the *gopīs*, He was struck with emotion. Thus He could not hide Himself, and out of fear He became motionless.

"Kṛṣṇa assumed His four-armed Nārāyaṇa form and sat there. When all the *gopīs* came, seeing Him they spoke as follows. 'He is not Kṛṣṇa! He is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Nārāyaṇa.' After saying this, they offered obeisances and the following respectful prayers. 'O Lord Nārāyaṇa, we offer our respectful obeisances unto You. Kindly be merciful to us. Give us the

association of Kṛṣṇa and thus vanquish our lamentation.' After saying this and offering obeisances, all the *gopīs* dispersed.

"Then Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī came and appeared before Lord Kṛṣṇa. When Lord Kṛṣṇa saw Rādhārāṇī, He wanted to maintain the four-armed form to joke with Her. In front of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, Śrī Kṛṣṇa tried His best to keep four arms, but He was completely unable to do so. The influence of Rādhārāṇī's pure ecstasy is so inconceivably great that it forced Kṛṣṇa to come to His original two-armed form" (Cc. *Ādi* 17. 282–292).

"Prior to the *rāsa* dance, Lord Kṛṣṇa hid Himself in a grove just to have fun. When the *gopīs* came, their eyes resembling those of deer, by His sharp intelligence He exhibited His beautiful four-armed form to hide Himself. But when Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī came there, Kṛṣṇa could not maintain His four arms in Her presence. This is the wonderful glory of Her love" (*Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi*).



Catur-bhuja, at the place where Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī found Kṛṣṇa hiding

In Paitha there is a *catur-bhuja* (four-armed) Deity installed by Vajranābha. Nearby is Candra-sarovara, where, it is said, the moon-god ceased all external movements while witnessing the *rāsa* dance. The *samādhi* of the famous Vaiṣṇava poet Sura dāsa is also located at Candra-sarovara.

Puñcari

Puñcari is at the opposite end of Govardhana Hill from Rādhā-kuṇḍa. When King Indra bathed Kṛṣṇa, many Gandharvas and Apsarās danced to glorify the occasion and bathed in the two *kuṇḍas* here. Just nearby is a temple of Puñcari Lota Bābā, a friend of Kṛṣṇa's who sat down to wait for Him when He left for Mathurā. This deity is being worshiped in the mood that the friend is still waiting for Kṛṣṇa to return. Also close by is the cave where Rāghava Paṇḍita, an intimate associate of Lord Caitanya, used to perform *bhajana.* He is one of the main characters in the *Bhakti-ratnākara,* by Narahari Cakravartī.

Śyāma Dhaka

This is a small forest where Kṛṣṇa and His cowherding friends would come to play. It is especially known for the cup-shaped leaves which grow in the trees. Once Kṛṣṇa displayed the pastime of being hungry. Some of His friends had yogurt, but He had no cup to put it in, so He used some of these uniquely shaped leaves to carry the yogurt.

Ādi-badarī

One time the cowherd men of Vṛndāvana, headed by Nanda Mahārāja, desired to go to Badarikāśrama on pilgrimage. Hearing the news, Kṛṣṇa gathered all the cowherd men together and led them into the hills on the western side of the Vraja-maṇḍala. Reaching Badarīnātha in Vraja, Kṛṣṇa

Śiva-liṅga at Ādi-badarī

explained to them that all the *tīrthas* (holy places) of the world are present in Vraja. He then showed them Hṛṣikeśa, Lakṣmaṇa-jhulā, Kedarnātha, and other northern *tīrthas.*

Deities at Ādi-badarī

Kāmya-vana

The *Ādi-varāha Purāṇa* explains this to be the forest where all desires (*kāma*) of the demigods and devotees are fulfilled.

The presiding deity of Vṛndāvana, Vṛndā-devī, is worshiped in the Rādhā-Govinda temple here. She was previously installed in the Rādhā-

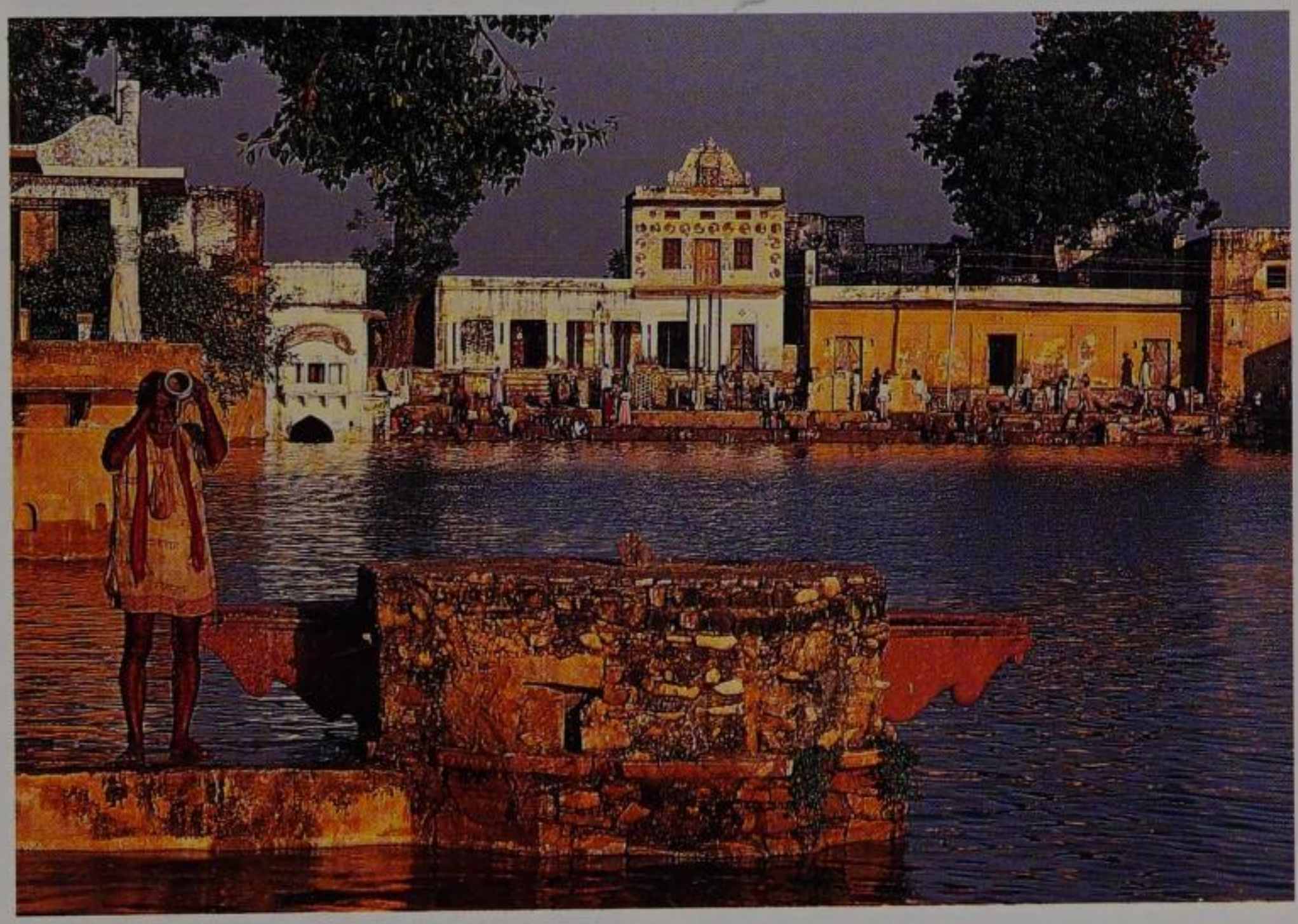
Vṛnda-devī, the presiding deity of Vṛndāvana

Kāmeśvara

found that they could not move the Vṛndā-devī deity any further. They had to proceed without her. In this way Vṛndā-devī escaped the Mohammedan attack and was able to remain within the Vraja-maṇḍala area.

"Filled with a great flood of love and decorating the ever-blossoming groves of Vṛndāvana with many fragrant flowers, Vṛndā-devī creates a festive atmosphere for Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa to enjoy transcendental pastimes with Their dear friends. Let me surrender to Vṛndā-devī" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 31).

Vajranābha installed a *śiva-liṅga* named Kāmeśvara in Kāmya-vana, and close by is a small temple where, people say, the Pāṇḍavas stayed while in exile from Hastināpura. Within the town there are several other temples,



Bimala-kuṇḍa

Govinda Mandira in Vṛndāvana. But during the Mohammedan invasions, she and several other deities were being taken to Jaipur City in Rajasthan, when the group traveling with the deities stopped in Kāmya-vana and many of which surround Bimala-kuṇḍa, where Kṛṣṇa and the cowherd boys used to play and water their cows.

The ancient temple of Caurāśi-khamba at Kāmya-vana displays

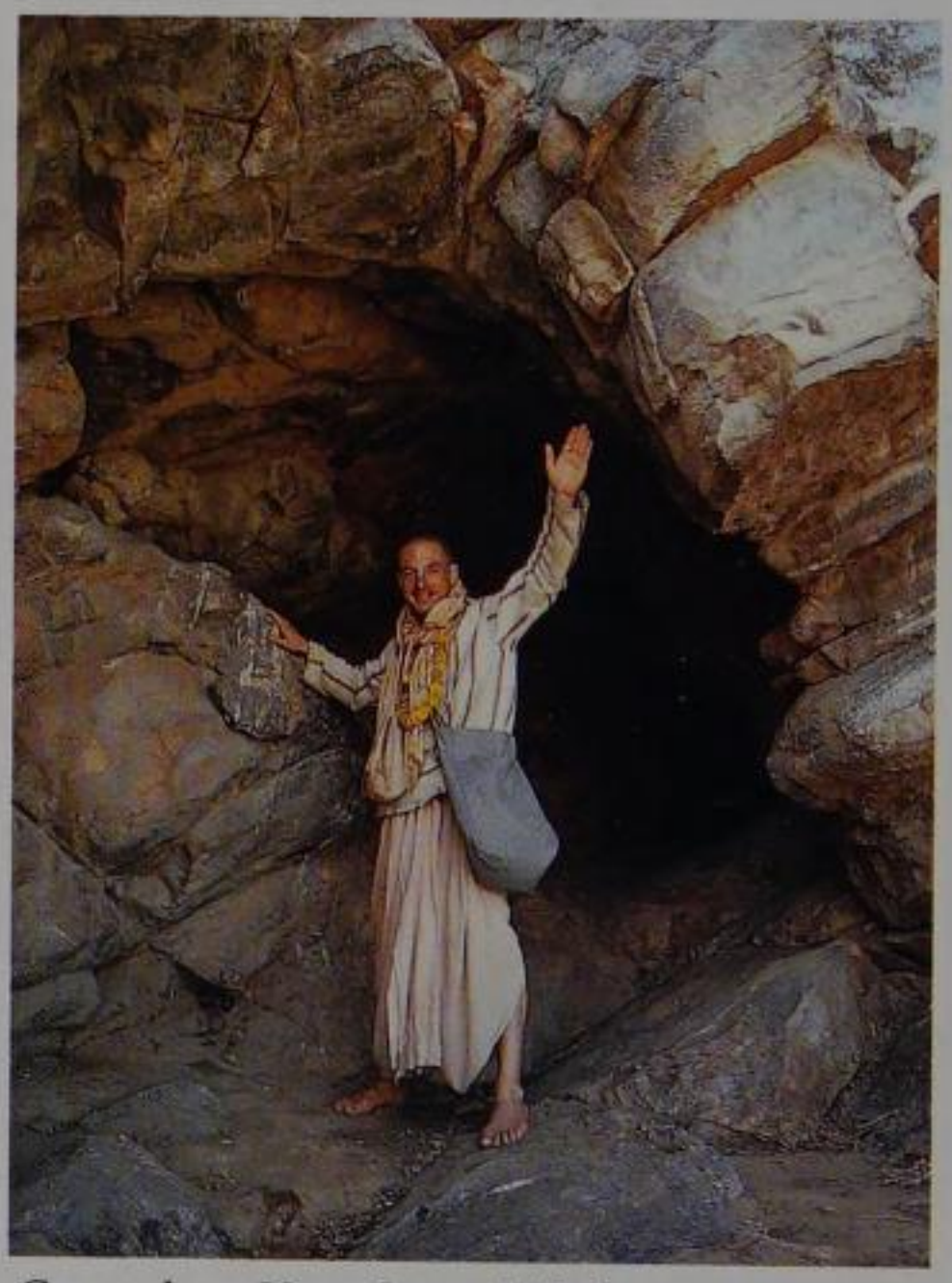
Caurāśi-khambha, an ancient temple in the town of Kāmya-vana

extraordinary architecture. According to the *Purāṇas* there are 8,400,000 species of life within this universe, and this temple has eighty-four carved pillars, each representing 100,000 species. These pillars are similar to the ones in Gokula, still present from Lord Kṛṣṇa's time 5,000 years ago.

Bhojana-sthalī

Once Kṛṣṇa claimed that in His previous birth He was Lord Rāmacandra. The *gopīs* challenged Him to prove it by floating stones on water, just as Lord Rāma had done. So Kṛṣṇa called some monkeys and with their help built a stone bridge in the river that flowed in Kāmya-vana. Today, one can still see some of the stones.

Outside the town of Kāmya-vana are several other places of Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. Upon a large hill, His footprints are imbedded within the stones, which softened upon hearing the sound of His melodious flute. From



Cave where Vyomāsura hid the cowherd boys

atop this hill one can also see Lukāluka-kuṇḍa, where Kṛṣṇa used to dive underwater and frighten the *gopīs* by grabbing their legs. Nearby is the cave where the demon Vyomāsura kept the cowherd boys after stealing them, and across the road from the cave are the footprints of Lord Balarāma imbedded in the stones.

A short distance from here is Bhojana-sthalī, where the imprints of Lord Kṛṣṇa's plate can still be seen.

Kṛṣṇa and His friends would often take their packed lunch in this area of Vraja.

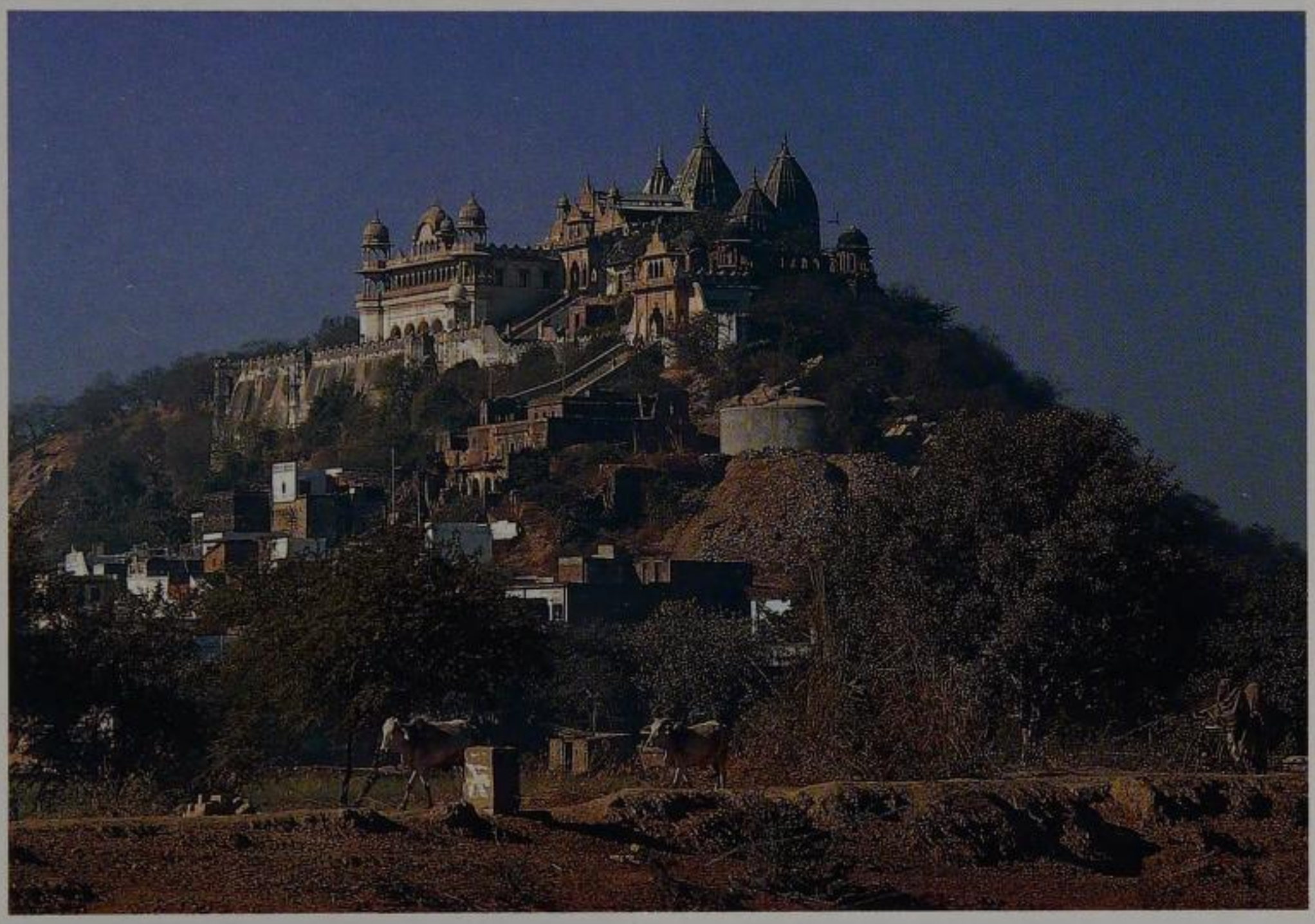
Kadamba-khaṇḍī

The *kadamba* is a small yellow flower that grows on trees and is generally found in the Vṛndāvana area. The small forest of Kadamba-khaṇḍī is a place of many Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa pastimes. "Blossoming with happiness, the forest-king Kṛṣṇa became completely captivated by the sidelong glances of the forest-queen Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, who was also blossoming with happiness as He decorated Her with many blossoming flowers from the king of *kadamba* trees. I pray that supremely opulent king of *kadamba* trees may appear before me and grant transcendental happiness to my eyes" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 73).

Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī, a contemporary of the six Gosvāmīs, performed his *bhajana* here. He has written a book called *Vraja-bhakti-vilāsa,* describing how to perform the *parikrama* of Vraja. He also established many temples in this area, including the Larily Lāl temple of Varṣāṇā.

Uñchogaon

Lalitā-sakhī, one of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's closest friends, lived here. Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī's *samādhi* is at the foot of the hill upon which the Lalitā Mandira stands. Nearby is a Balarāma Mandira, where Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa would worship the Deity.



Varṣāṇā

Varṣāṇā

The *Padma Purāṇa* tells of how Lord Brahmā, the first created being in the universe, prayed to Lord Kṛṣṇa that he could assist Him during His *līlā* within the material world. Kṛṣṇa instructed him to take the form of a hill in Vraja. This hill is in Varṣāṇā and has four peaks, representing Lord Brahmā's four heads. Atop the first peak is the Larily Lāl Mandira (also known as Śrījī Mandira). The Deity in this temple was installed by

Vajranābha. Thousands of years later he was worshiped by Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī. King Vṛṣabhānu and his family, including Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, lived at Varṣāṇā.

Mor-kuṭir

While playing in the forests around Her home, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī complained that they were bereft of beautiful peacocks. Kṛṣṇa appeared dressed

Painting at Mor-kuṭir

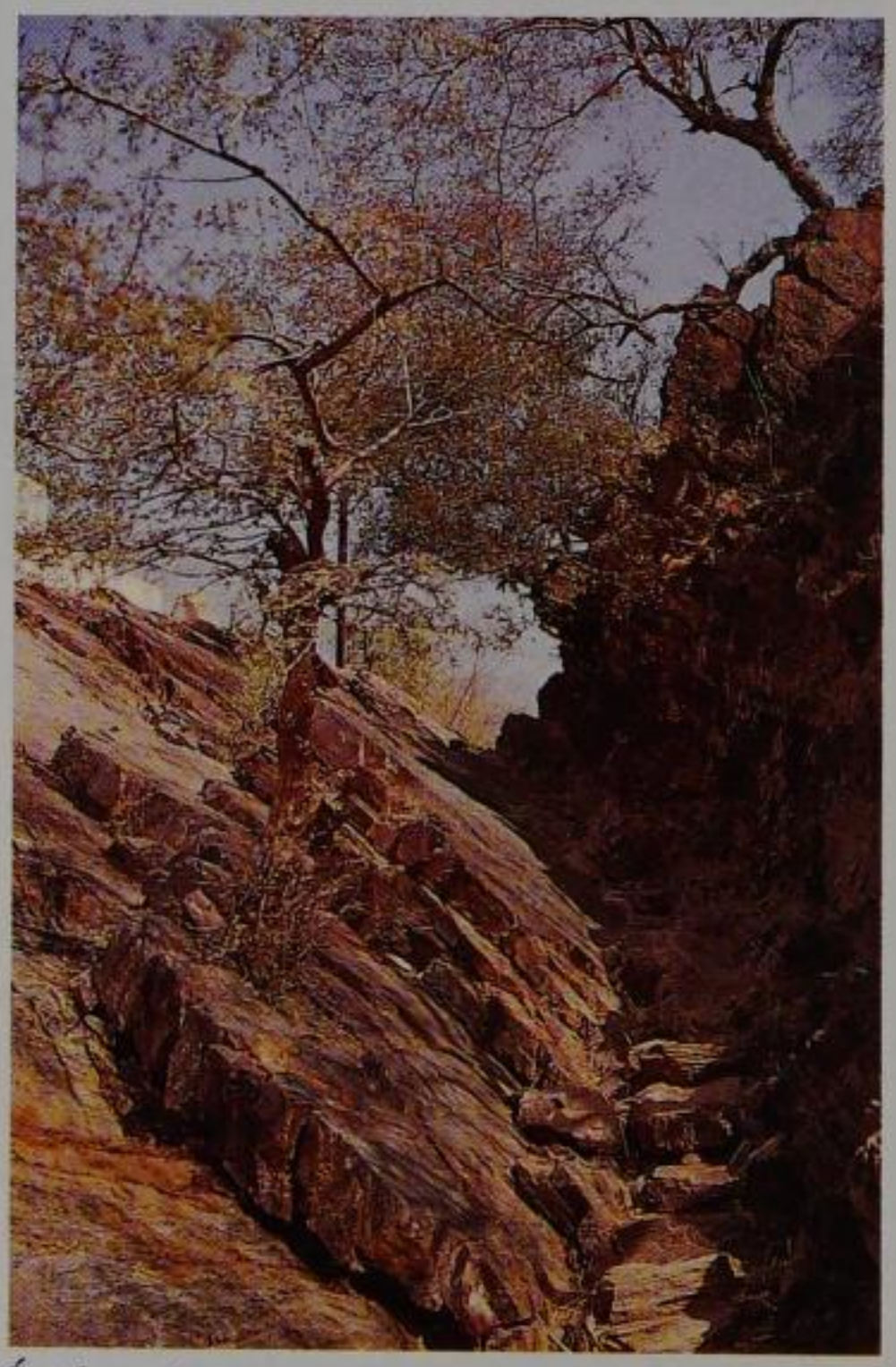
like a peacock and danced for Rādhārāṇī and Her friends. A blind saint once received a transcendental vision of this pastime and produced a painting that now graces the walls of the small temple here.

Śaṅkarī-kor

Surrounding the hill with four peaks are the town of Varṣāṇā and the village of Citra. Along the path between the two villages is a very narrow passageway. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Her *gopī* friends used to travel through this area carrying pots of yogurt and milk, but Kṛṣṇa, along with His cowherd friends, would stop the *gopīs* and tax them before allowing them to pass. Kṛṣṇa would sometimes break Rādhārāṇī's milk pots when She refused to pay the tax, and the stones here still bear the marks of those broken pots.

"Whenever Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī leaves Her house, She is always well dressed and attractive. It is Her womanly nature to attract Śrī Kṛṣṇa's attention, and upon seeing Her so attractively dressed, Śrī Kṛṣṇa desires to touch Her body. The Lord then finds some fault in Her and prohibits Her from going to a river crossing and stops Her from picking flowers. Such are the pastimes between Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī and Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Being a cowherd girl, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī regularly carries a container of milk and often goes to sell it on the other side of the Yamunā. To cross the river, She has to pay the boatman, and the spot where the boatman collects his fares is called the *dāna-ghāṭī*. Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa stops Her from going, telling Her, 'First You have to pay the fee; then You will be allowed to go.' This pastime is called *dāna-keli-līlā*. Similarly, if Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī wants to pick a flower, Śrī Kṛṣṇa claims to be the garden's proprietor and prohibits Her. This pastime is called *kilā-kiñcita*. Rādhārāṇī's shyness arises due to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's prohibitions, and ecstatic loving symptoms called *kilā-kiñcita-bhāva* are



Śaṅkarī-kor

manifest at this time. These ecstatic symptoms are explained in the following verse, which is from Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi* (*Anubhava-prakaraṇa* 44). 'Pride, ambition, weeping, smiling, envy, fear and anger are the seven ecstatic loving symptoms manifest by a jubilant shrinking away, and these symptoms are called *kilā-kiñcita-bhāva*' " (Cc. *Madhya* 14.173, purport; 14.174).

Prema-sarovara

Once while Rādhārāṇī was sitting on Kṛṣṇa's lap, a small bumblebee came and started buzzing around Their lotus feet. Kṛṣṇa's *brāhmaṇa* friend Madhumaṅgala chased the bee away and exclaimed, "Now I've gotten rid of *madhu*." *Madhu* is a name for bumblebees. But since one of Kṛṣṇa's names is Madhusūdana, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī thought Madhumaṅgala had gotten rid of Kṛṣṇa and started to shed tears. Kṛṣṇa also began to shed tears upon seeing Her ecstatic mood, and Their love-filled tears produced this *kuṇḍa*.

"Among the *gopīs*, Śrīmatī Rādhikā is the foremost. She surpasses all in beauty, in good qualities, in good fortune, and, above all, in love" (Cc. *Ādi* 4.214).

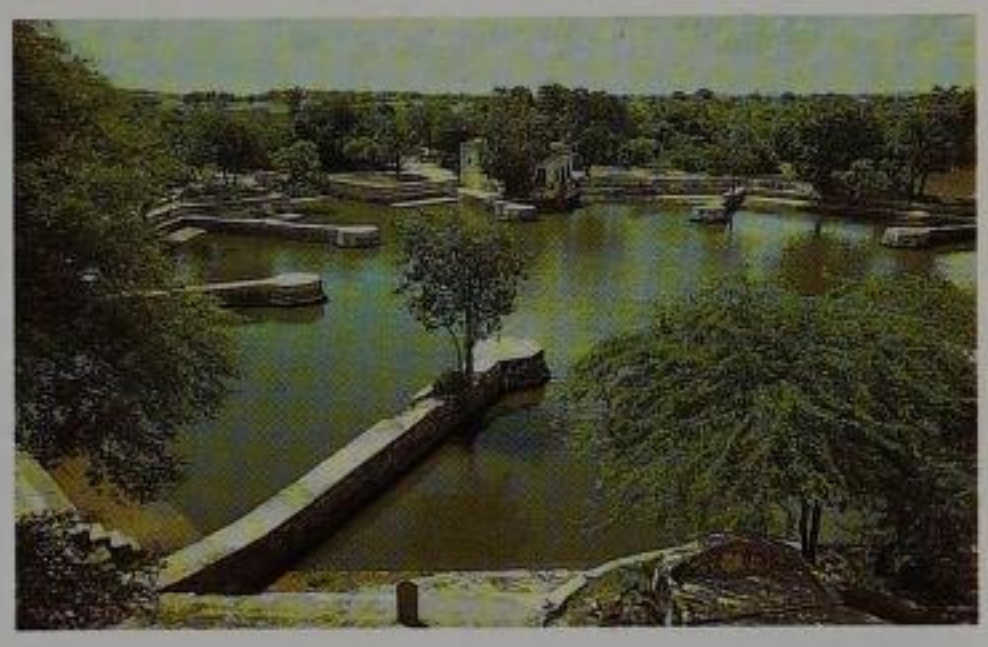
"Just as Rādhā is dear to Lord Kṛṣṇa, so Her bathing place (Rādhā-kuṇḍa) is dear to Him. She alone is His most beloved of all the *gopīs*" (*Padma Purāṇa*).

"O Pārtha, in all the three planetary systems, this earth is especially fortunate, for on earth is the town of Vṛndāvana. And there the *gopīs* are especially glorious because among them is My Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī" (*Ādi Purāṇa*).

"The camellike nondevotees cannot enter into these topics. Therefore there is special jubilation in my heart. For fear of them I do not wish to speak, but if they do not understand, then what can be happier in all the three worlds? Therefore after offering obeisances to the devotees, for their satisfaction I shall speak without hesitating.

"Once Lord Kṛṣṇa considered within His heart: 'Everyone says that I am complete bliss, full of all *rasas*. All the world derives pleasure from Me. Is there anyone who can give Me pleasure? One who has a hundred times more qualities than Me could give pleasure to My mind. One more qualified than Me is impossible to find in the world. But in Rādhā alone I feel the presence of one who can give Me pleasure.

" 'Although My beauty defeats the beauty of ten million Cupids, al-



Prema-sarovara

though it is unequaled and unsurpassed, and although it gives pleasure to the three worlds, seeing Rādhārāṇī gives pleasure to My eyes. The vibration of My transcendental flute attracts the three worlds, but My ears are enchanted by the sweet words of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Although the entire creation is full of different tastes because of Me, I am charmed by the nectarean taste of the lips of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. And although My touch is cooler than ten million moons, I am refreshed by the touch of Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Thus although I am the source for the happiness of the entire world, the beauty and attributes of Śrī Rādhikā are My life and soul.

" 'In this way My affectionate feelings for Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī may be understood, but on analysis I find them contradictory. My eyes are fully satisfied when I look upon Śrīmatī

Rādhārāṇī, but by looking upon Me, She becomes even more advanced in satisfaction. The flutelike murmur of the bamboos rubbing against one another steals Rādhārāṇī's consciousness, for She thinks it to be the sound of My flute. And She embraces a *tamāla* tree, mistaking it for Me. "I have gotten the embrace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa," She thinks, "so now My life is fulfilled."

" 'Thus She remains immersed in pleasing Kṛṣṇa, taking the tree in Her arms.

" 'When a favorable breeze carries to Her the fragrance of My body, She is blinded by love and tries to fly into that breeze. When She tastes the betel chewed by Me, She merges in an ocean of joy and forgets everything else. Even with hundreds of mouths I could not express the transcendental pleasure She derives from My association.

" 'Seeing the luster of Her complexion after Our pastimes together, I forget My own identity in happiness. The sage Bharata has said that the mellows of lover and beloved are equal. But He does not know the mellows of My Vṛndāvana. The happiness I feel when meeting Rādhārāṇī is a hundred times greater than the happiness I get from meeting others' " (Cc. *Ādi* 4.235–258).

"My dear auspicious Rādhārāṇī, Your body is the source of all beauty. Your red lips are softer than the sense of immortal sweetness. Your face bears the aroma of a lotus flower, Your sweet words defeat the vibrations of the cuckoo, and Your limbs are cooler than the pulp of sandalwood. All My transcendental senses are overwhelmed in ecstatic pleasure by tasting You, who are completely decorated by beautiful qualities" (*Lalitā-mādhava* 9.9).

"Her eyes are enchanted by the beauty of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the enemy of Kaṁsa. Her body thrills in pleasure at His touch. Her ears are always attracted to His sweet voice. Her nostrils are enchanted by His fragrance, and Her tongue hankers for the nectar of His soft lips. She hangs down Her lotuslike face, exercising self-control only by pretense, but She cannot help showing the external signs of Her spontaneous love for Lord Kṛṣṇa" (Verse by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī).

" 'Considering this, I can understand that some unknown mellow in Me controls the entire existence of My captivator, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. I am always eager to taste the joy that Rādhārāṇī derives from Me. In spite of various efforts, I have not been able to taste it. But My desire to relish that pleasure increases as I smell its sweetness. I have appeared in the world to taste mellows. I shall taste the mellows of pure love in various ways. I shall teach devotional service, which springs from the spontaneous love of the devotees, by demonstrating it Myself with My pastimes. But these three desires have not been satisfied, for one cannot enjoy them in a contrary position. Unless I accept the luster of the ecstatic love of Śrī Rādhikā, these three desires cannot be fulfilled. Therefore, assuming Rādhārāṇī's sentiments and bodily complexion, I shall descend to fulfill these three desires' " (Cc. *Ādi* 4.261–268).

"Lord Kṛṣṇa desired to taste the limitless nectarean mellows of the love of one of His multitude of damsels (Śrī Rādhā), and so He has assumed the form of Lord Caitanya. He has tasted that love while hiding His own dark complexion with Her effulgent yellow color. May that Lord Caitanya confer upon us His grace" (*Caitanyāṣṭaka* 2.3).

Saṅketa

This is a small village between Varṣāṇā, where Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī lived, and Nandagrāma, where Śrī Kṛṣṇa lived. When Kṛṣṇa would go out into the fields to herd cows and

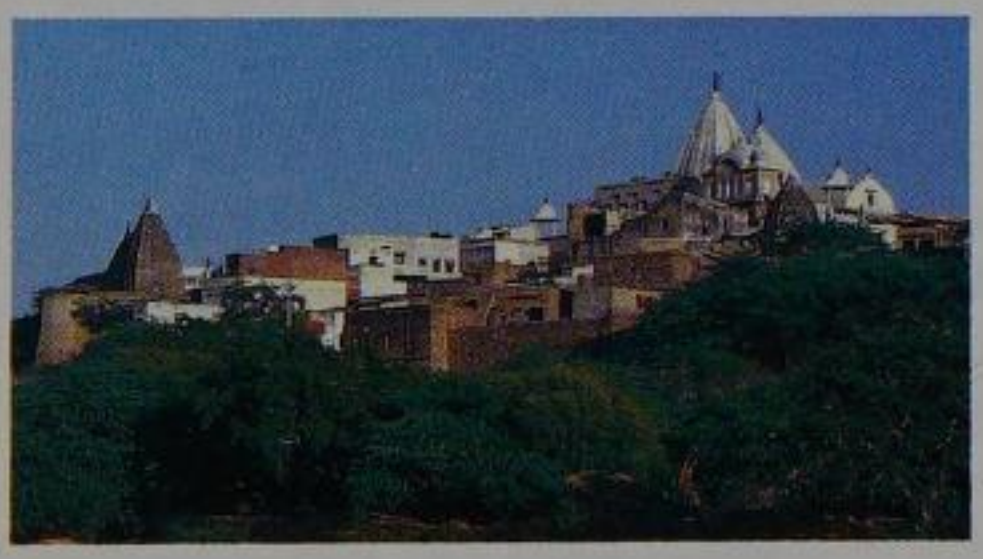
Saṅkeṭ-devī

Rādhārāṇī would go to pick flowers, They would often meet in Saṅkeṭ.

Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī's *bhajana-kuṭir* is located near the Saṅkeṭ-devī Mandira.

Nandagrāma

When Nanda Mahārāja and the other cowherd men decided to move from Gokula because of the disturbances caused by demons, they moved to this place. On the top of the hill (considered to be an incarnation of Lord Śiva) sits a large temple with deities of Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma, Nanda



Nandagrāma

Mahārāja, mother Yaśodā, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and two of Kṛṣṇa's cowherd friends. When Lord Caitanya visited here, the deities were being kept in a cave, but later the temple was constructed and the deities moved inside.

"Charming Nandīśvara Hill bore an abundance of fruits and flowers. Near its summit, which was studded with jewels, stood the great city of the king of Vraja. In Nanda Mahārāja's capital were many beautiful gardens, wells, ponds, marketplaces, and palaces studded with wonderful jewels. In Nanda Mahārāja's capital were many beautiful residences for the *surabhi* cows, and many large gates, studded with jewels and protected by the king's soldiers decked in golden ornaments. These opulences enchanted everyone's heart.

Deities at Nandagrāma

"In the middle of that city was Nanda Mahārāja's splendid palace made of lapis lazuli, precious coral, emeralds, and many other jewels, constructed with many large pillars, elegant windows and lattices, a beautiful roof, rooftop apartments, and many glistening flags. Although expertly constructed with many playful and amazing tricks, the assembly halls of Mahārāja Nanda, who was worshiped by everyone, were beyond the touch of the illusory potency, *māyā*. They were the residence of the goddess of fortune, and they were admired by the best of architects. Outside the halls were large gates made of gold and

jewels and protected by royal guards whose handsome limbs removed the pride of King Indra.

"In Nanda Mahārāja's kingdom there was a very wonderful system of aqueducts carrying water from the hills to every house and garden by a series of bamboo pipes. The splendid homes of the people in Nanda Mahārāja's kingdom were made of lapis lazuli, diamonds, and other precious gems and were decorated with many glistening flags. In each home there were continual festivals celebrating the glories of Lord Viṣṇu, the husband of the goddess of fortune.

"Nanda Mahārāja's kingdom was surrounded by a very tall, splendid, and well fortified wall with beautiful gardens on its topmost ramparts. Circling the entire kingdom was a great moat filled by streams flowing from the hills. The forests of Mahārāja Nanda's kingdom were filled with the sounds of musk deer, *cāmaras,* and other wild animals as they walked through the mud and clay of the forest. The forest streams were filled with the sounds of the waves rushing past the many lotus flowers.

"Mahārāja Nanda's large, splendid, and transcendental kingdom around Nandīśvara Hill was faithfully served by Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning. It was the favorite place of Lord Hari, and it stood next to the kingdom of Mahārāja Vṛṣabhānu" (*Śrī Aiśvarya-kādambinī* 3–13).

Nandīśvara

Nandīśvara

Lord Śiva once came to the door of Nanda and Yaśodā's house asking to see child Kṛṣṇa. When mother Yaśodā saw his gruesome appearance (Lord Śiva is decorated with ashes, bones, and snakes), she refused him entrance. After unsuccessfully trying in various ways to persuade mother Yaśodā, Lord Śiva went to a nearby forest and began to meditate on Kṛṣṇa.

Back at the house child Kṛṣṇa started cry. No one could stop Him. Mother Yaśodā was worried and called all the elderly *gopīs* for help. Finally she realized that she might be receiving an adverse reaction for not receiving the guest properly. She sent everyone looking for the tantric *yogī* who'd come earlier, and after a short time they returned with Lord Śiva.

As soon as Lord Śiva came before Kṛṣṇa, the child stopped crying and beamed a big smile. Mother Yaśodā, under the influences of *yoga-māyā*, was considering Kṛṣṇa an ordinary boy and Lord Śiva a tantric *yogī*. Out of gratitude she said to Lord Śiva, "My son has finally stopped crying because of your presence. What can I do for you?" Lord Śiva replied that his only request was to be allowed to always see the beautiful child Kṛṣṇa and eat the remnants of His food.

Today, the priests at the

Nandagrāma Hill temple offer Kṛṣṇa's remnants to the Nandīśvara *liṅga* at the entrance to the temple. The *liṅga* was installed by Vajranābha.

Nṛsiṁha-Varāha Mandira

Because so many demons were disturbing the inhabitants of Vṛndāvana, Nanda Mahārāja took the advice of Garga Muni and started the worship of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva. Nanda's original Nṛsiṁha Deity, along with Lord Varāha, is being worshiped in a small house in Nandagrāma village. His original Deity of Lord Nārāyaṇa is also there, but the Deity was disfigured during Mohammedan invasions and is not on the altar.

who gave Her the benediction that whoever ate the food She cooked would never fall sick. Thus, mother Yaśodā would always try to arrange for Rādhārāṇī to cook for Her son.

On the banks of this *sarovara* are the *bhajana-kuṭir* of Sanātana Gosvāmī and the *samādhi* of Niṣkiñcana Kṛṣṇadāsa Bābājī.

"On the pretext of going to fetch clear water the lotus-eyed *gopīs* again and again meet Lord Kṛṣṇa with great happiness and love at Pāvana-sarovara Lake, which is filled with many *kadamba* trees and the pleasant humming sounds of many bees. May Pāvana-sarovara Lake protect us" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 59).

Nanda Mahārāja's Deities of Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva and Lord Varāha

Pāvana-sarovara

This lake is located at the bottom of Nandagrāma Hill. Kṛṣṇa would come to bathe here with His cows and friends, and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī would come here to cook for Kṛṣṇa every morning. She had once pleased Durvāsā Muni, a great mystic *yogī*,

Uddhava-kyārī

While Kṛṣṇa was at Mathurā, He sent Uddhava to Vṛndāvana with a message for its residents. After meeting with Nanda Mahārāja and mother Yaśodā, Uddhava came to this secluded forest to deliver Kṛṣṇa's message to the *gopīs*. While Uddhava read

Kṛṣṇa kills Bakāsura, a demoniac friend of Kaṁsa's appearing like a giant bird

the message, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī exhibited *mahā-bhāva*, the topmost symptoms of ecstatic love.

Ter-kadamba

A short distance from the village of Nandagrāma, across the fields toward Javat, is a small forest of *kadamba* trees. Lord Kṛṣṇa used to sit in the trees and play His flute, attracting the transcendental *surabhi* cows. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's *bhajana-kuṭir* is located here.

Nearby Javat is the village where Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī lived after She was married.

Khadira-vana

"All the cowherd boys would daily go to the banks of the river Yamunā to water their calves. Usually, when the calves drank water from the Yamunā, the boys also drank. One day, after drinking, when they were sitting on the bank of the river, they saw a huge animal that looked something like a duck and was as big as a hill. Its top was as strong as a thunderbolt. When they saw that unusual animal, they became afraid of it. The name of this beast was Bakāsura, and he was a friend of Kaṁsa's. He appeared on the scene suddenly and immediately attacked Kṛṣṇa with his pointed, sharp beaks and quickly swallowed Him up. When Kṛṣṇa was thus swallowed, all the boys, headed by Balarāma, became almost breathless, as if they had died. But when the Bakāsura demon was swallowing up Kṛṣṇa, he felt a burning fiery sensation in his throat. This was due to the glowing effulgence of Kṛṣṇa. The demon quickly threw Kṛṣṇa up and tried to kill Him by pinching Him in his beaks. Bakāsura did not know that although Kṛṣṇa was playing the part of a child of Nanda Mahārāja, He was still the original father of Lord Brahmā, the creator of this universe. The child of mother Yaśodā, who is the reservoir of pleasure for the demigods and who is the maintainer of saintly persons, caught hold of the beaks of the great gigantic duck, and before His cowherd boyfriends, bifurcated his mouth, just as a child very easily splits a blade of grass. From the sky, the denizens of the heavenly planets showered flowers like the *camelī*, the most fragrant of all flowers, as a token of their congratulations. Accompanying the showers of flowers was a vibration of bugles, drums and conchshells" (*Kṛṣṇa*, pp. 104–105).

This pastime took place in Khadira-vana, where the Yamunā river used to flow many years ago. The *bhajana-kuṭirs* of Lokanātha Gosvāmī and Bhūgarbha Gosvāmī are on the banks of Madhurī-kuṇḍa. Three miles from here, in the town of Umbrayo, the Deity of Rādhā-vinoda manifest before Lokanātha Gosvāmī.

Garbhodakśāyī Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī at Śeṣa-śāyī temple

Śeṣa-śāyī

"After seeing the places of Lord Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, Śrī Caitanya went to Śeṣa-śāyī, where He saw Lakṣmī and recited the following verse. 'O dearly beloved! Your lotus feet are so soft that we place them gently on our breasts, fearing that Your feet will be hurt. Our life rests only in You. Our minds, therefore, are filled with anxiety that Your tender feet might be wounded by pebbles as You roam about the forest path.' This is a verse from *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.31.19) spoken by the *gopīs* when Kṛṣṇa left them in the midst of the *rāsa-līlā*"

(Cc. *Madhya* 18.64–65, with purport).

The Deities of Śeṣa-śāyī (Garbhodakśāyī) Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī-devī were installed here on the banks of Kṣīra-sāgara by Vajranābha.

Rāma-ghāṭa

After living away from Vṛndāvana for many years, Lord Balarāma became very anxious to see His father and mother, Mahārāja Nanda and Yaśodā, so He returned, riding upon His chariot. After greeting all the residents of Vṛndāvana, Lord Balarāma met with the *gopīs*, and for two months He passed every night with them in the forest of Vṛndāvana.

scratched by Lord's Balarāma's plow, the Yamunā river still has many branches, which attest to the omnipotency of Lord Balarāma.

"When the Yamunā River would not come according to His order, angry Lord Balarāma began to drag it toward the ocean with the edge of His plow. I devotedly offer my respects to wonderful Rāma-ghāṭa, where even today all men may see the marks where Balarāma began to drag the Yamunā" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 94).

Kelā-tīrtha

In the *Bhakti-ratnākara* it is said that Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma used to

Rāma-ghāṭa

One night Lord Balarāma became exceptionally blissful after drinking the natural beverage Varuṇī. In that happy mood, wanting to enjoy with the *gopīs* in the Yamunā, He asked Yamunā to come near. She refused, however, thinking Him intoxicated, and the Lord became angry. He began to scratch the earth with His plow to draw the river closer to Him. Yamunā, afraid of Lord Balarāma's anger, immediately came and surrendered unto Him, praying to Him and admitting her fault. Lord Balarāma forgave her. Because of being

play at Kelā-tīrtha with the cowherd boys throughout the day. So absorbed were They in Their play that mother Yaśodā had to call Them to take Their baths and eat Their lunch.

Cīra-ghāṭa

"According to Vedic civilization, unmarried girls from ten to fourteen years of age are supposed to worship either Lord Śiva or goddess Durgā in order to get a nice husband. But the unmarried girls of Vṛndāvana were already attracted by the beauty of Kṛṣṇa. . . . All the unmarried *gopīs* in

Vṛndāvana used to daily worship goddess Kātyāyaṇī early in the morning after taking bath in the river Yamunā. Kātyāyaṇī is another name for goddess Durgā. The goddess is worshiped by preparing a doll made out of sand mixed with earth from the bank of the Yamunā. . . .

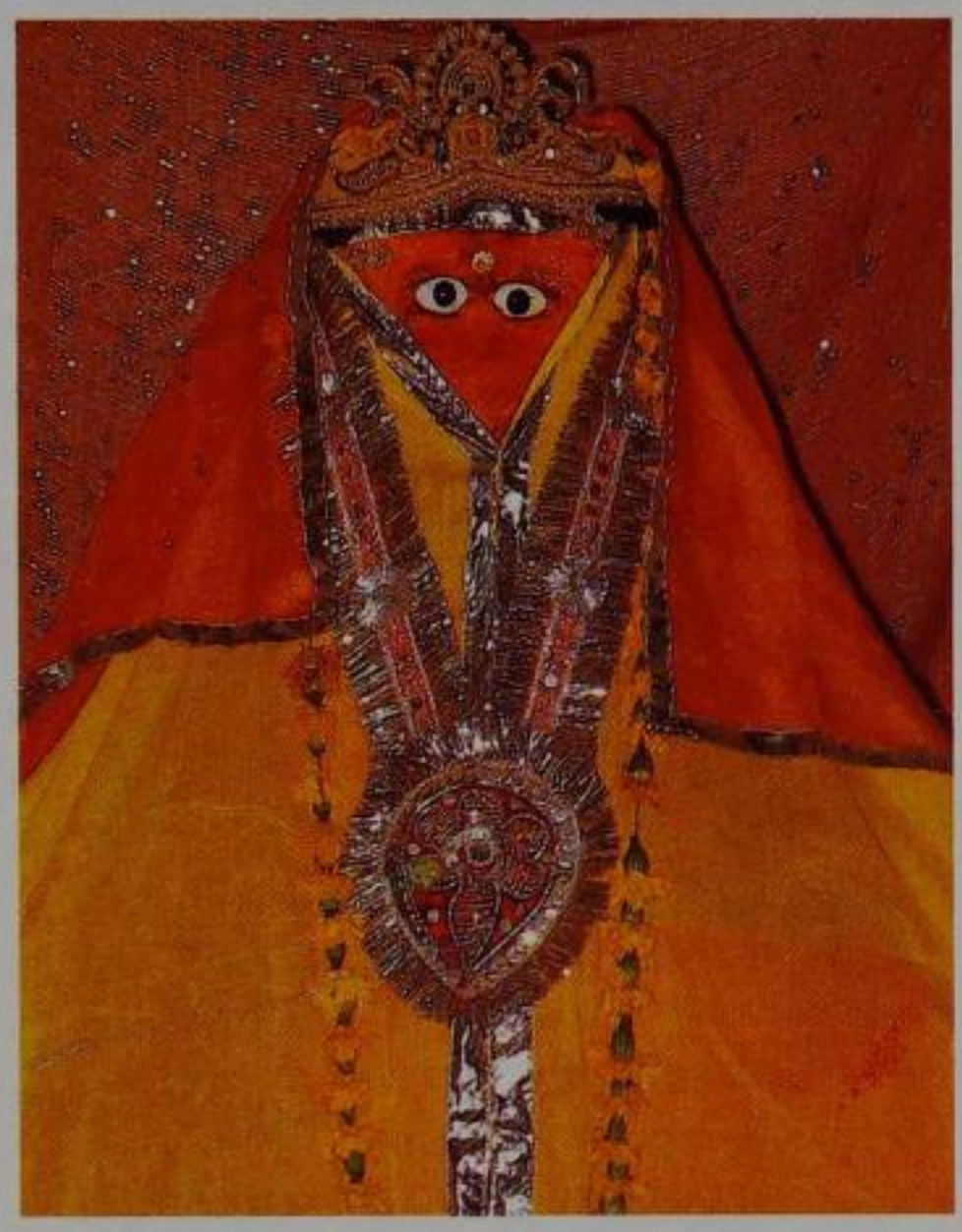
"The unmarried girls used to pray with great devotion to goddess Kātyāyaṇī, addressing her as follows: 'O supreme eternal energy of the Personality of Godhead, O supreme mystic power, O supreme controller of this material world, O goddess, please be kind to us and arrange for our marriage with the son of Nanda Mahārāja, Kṛṣṇa.' The Vaiṣṇavas generally do not worship any demigods. . . . Generally people worship goddess Durgā for some material benediction. Here, the *gopīs* prayed to the goddess to become wives of Lord Kṛṣṇa. The purport is that if Kṛṣṇa is the center of activity, a devotee can adopt any means to achieve that goal. . . .

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead, knowing the minds of the unmarried young *gopīs,* benedicted them with their desired objective. They had prayed for Kṛṣṇa to become their husband and Kṛṣṇa wanted to fulfill their desires" (*Kṛṣṇa*, pp. 193–194).

Early one morning He stole their garments from the banks of the Yamunā River while they were bathing and, sitting on the branches of a *kadamba* tree, made each *gopī* come out of the water to stand naked before Him. Since a woman cannot be naked before any male except her husband, the unmarried *gopīs'* desire to have Kṛṣṇa as their husband was thus fulfilled.

"Although Kṛṣṇa cheated the young unmarried *gopīs* and made them stand naked before Him and enjoyed joking words with them, and although He treated them just like dolls and stole their garments, they were still pleased with Him and never lodged complaints against Him. This attitude of the *gopīs* is described by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu when He prays, 'My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, You may embrace Me or trample Me under Your feet, or You may make Me brokenhearted by never being present before Me. Whatever You like, You can do, because You have complete freedom to act. But in spite of all Your dealings, You are My Lord eternally, and I have no other worshipable object.' This is the attitude of the *gopīs* toward Kṛṣṇa" (*Kṛṣṇa*, pp. 196–197).

"Entering the clear waters of the Yamunā to prepare for the incomparable worship of goddess Kātyāyaṇī,



Kātyāyaṇī

the girls of Vraja left their garments on the shore. Smiling and clever Kṛṣṇa stole those garments, climbed a *kadamba* tree, embarrassed the girls by speaking many splendid joking words, and eventually returned the garments. I take shelter of Cīra-ghāṭa, where the Lord enjoyed these pastimes" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 84).

Nanda-ghāṭa

"The Govardhana ceremony took place on the new-moon day. After this,

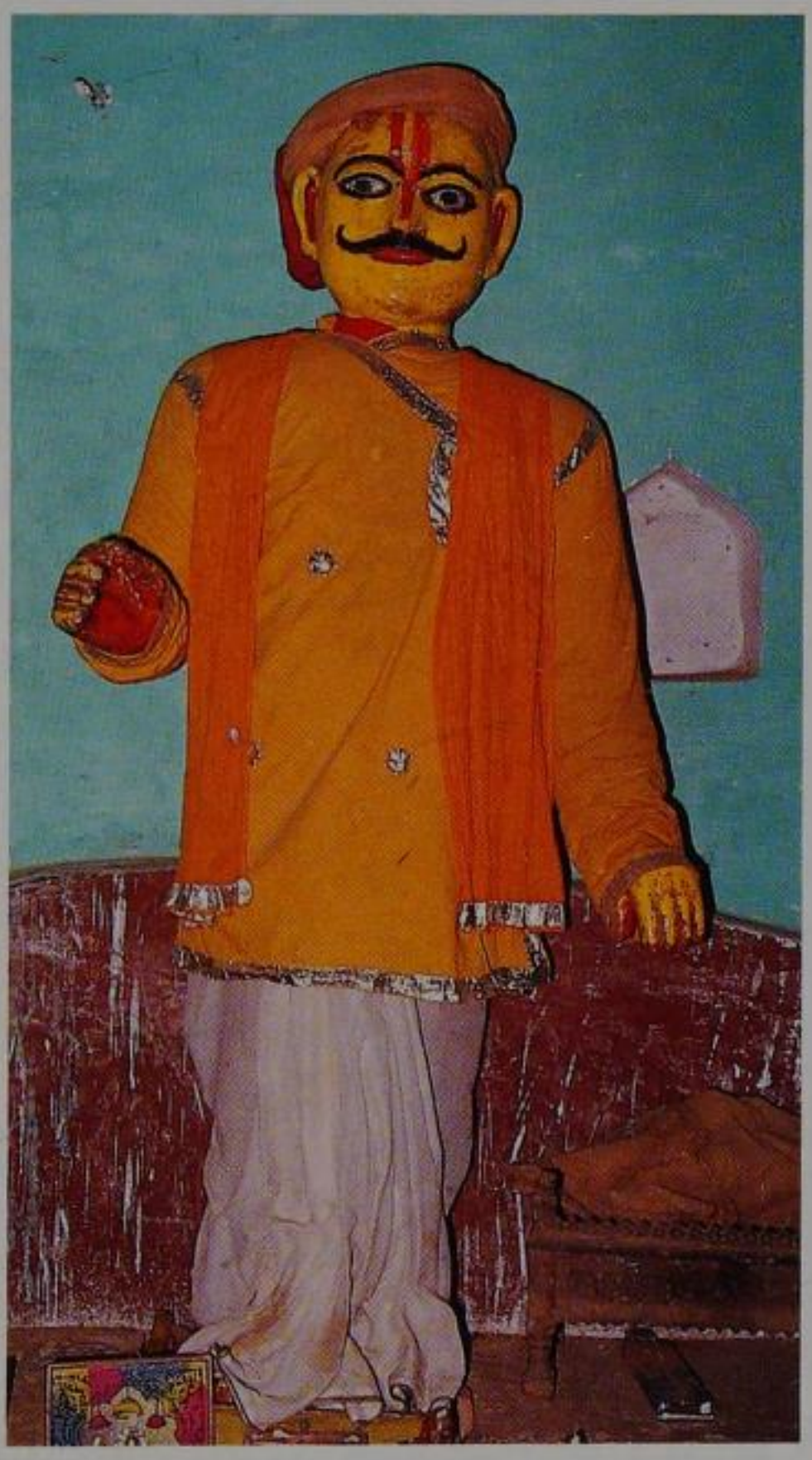
Nanda-ghāṭa

there were torrents of rain and hail-storms imposed by King Indra for seven days. Nine days of the waxing moon having passed, on the tenth day King Indra worshiped Lord Kṛṣṇa, and thus the matter was satisfactorily settled. After this, on the eleventh day of the full moon, there was Ekādaśī. Mahārāja Nanda observed fasting for the whole day, and just early in the morning of Dvādaśī, the day after Ekādaśī, he went to take bath in the river Yamunā. He entered deep into the water of the river, but he was arrested immediately by one of the servants of Varuṇadeva. These servants brought Nanda Mahārāja before the demigod Varuṇa and accused him of taking a bath in the river at the wrong time. . . .

"When Nanda Mahārāja was taken away by Varuṇa's servants, his companions began to call loudly for Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Immediately Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma could understand that Nanda Mahārāja was taken by Varuṇa, and thus They went to the abode of Varuṇa, for They were pledged to give protection. . . . Demigod Varuṇa received Lord Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma with great respect and said, 'My dear Lord, actually at this very moment, because of Your presence, my life as the demigod Varuṇa has become successful. Although I am the proprietor of all the treasures in the water, I know that such possessions do not make for a successful life. But this moment, as I look at You, my life is made completely successful because by seeing You I no longer have to accept a material body. Therefore, O Lord, Supreme Personality of Godhead, Supreme Brahman and Supersoul of everything, let me offer my respectful obeisances unto You. You are the supreme transcendental personality; there is no possibility of imposing the influence of material nature upon You. I am very sorry that my men, being foolish, by not knowing what to do or what not to do, have mistakenly arrested Your father, Nanda Mahārāja. So I beg Your pardon for the offense of my servants. I think that it was Your plan to show me Your mercy by Your personal presence here. My dear Lord Kṛṣṇa, Govinda, be merciful upon me—here is Your father. You can take him back

immediately. . . .' "

"Actually, although Kṛṣṇa was acting so wonderfully, Mahārāja Nanda and mother Yaśodā could not think of Him as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Instead, they always accepted Him as their beloved child. Thus Nanda Mahārāja did not accept the fact that Varuṇa worshiped Kṛṣṇa because Kṛṣṇa was the Supreme Person; rather he took it that because Kṛṣṇa was such a wonderful child He was respected even by Varuṇa. All the cowherd men, became eager to know if Kṛṣṇa was actually the Supreme Personality and if He was going to give them salvation. When they were all thus consulting among themselves, Kṛṣṇa understood their minds, and in order to assure them of their destiny in the spiritual kingdom, He showed them the spiritual sky" (*Kṛṣṇa*, pp. 231–232).



Diety of Nanda Mahārāja at Nanda-ghāṭa

Bhadravana

"Once, when Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were playing on the bank of the Yamunā, a demon of the name Vatsāsura assumed the shape of a calf and came there intending to kill the brothers. By taking the shape of a calf, the demon could mingle with other calves. Kṛṣṇa, however, specifically noticed this, and He immediately told Balarāma about the entrance of the demon. Both brothers then followed him and sneaked up upon him. Kṛṣṇa caught hold of the demon-calf by the two hind legs and tail, whipped him around very forcibly and threw him up into a tree. The demon lost his life and fell down from the top of the tree to the ground. When the demon lay dead on the ground, all the playmates of Kṛṣṇa congratulated Him, 'Well done, well done,' and the demigods in the sky began to shower flowers with great satisfaction. In this way, the maintainers of the complete creation, Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, used to take care of the calves in the morning every day, and thus They enjoyed Their childhood pastimes as cowherd boys in Vṛndāvana" (*Kṛṣṇa*, p. 104).

Vajranābha installed the *śiva-liṅga* in Bhadravana, named Bhadrīśvara.

Bhaṇḍīravana

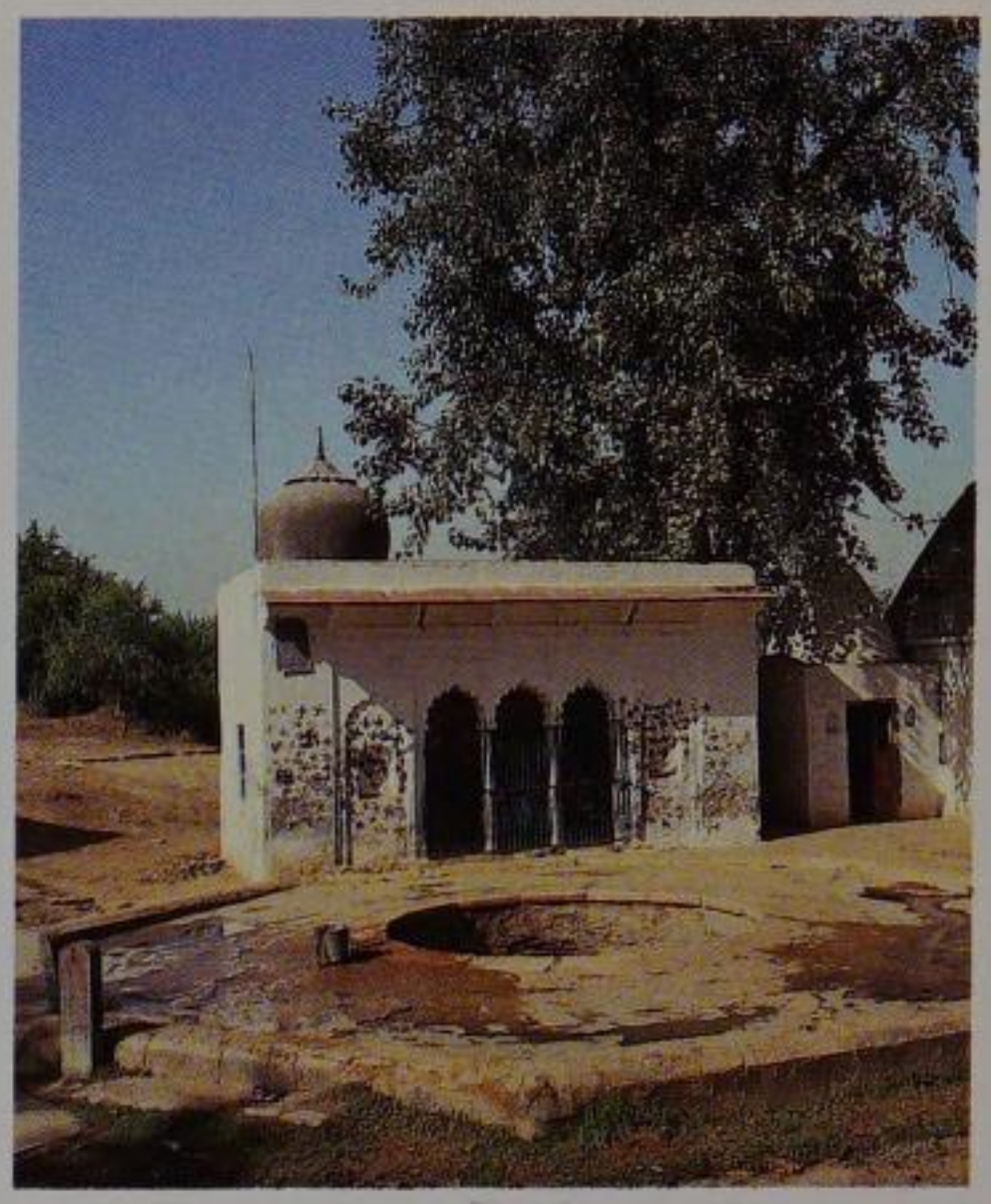
"Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa, along with Their friends, played all kinds of sports and enjoyed the soothing atmosphere of Vṛndāvana, full of rivers, lakes, rivulets, fine trees and excellent fruits and flowers.

"Once while They were engaged in Their transcendental pastimes, a demon of the name Pralambāsura entered Their company, desiring to kidnap both Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa. . . . Kṛṣṇa began to think how to kill the demon, but externally He received him as a friend, 'O My dear friend,' He said, 'It is very good that you have come to take part in Our pastimes.'

Kṛṣṇa then called His friends and ordered them: 'Now we shall play in pairs. We shall challenge one another in pairs.' . . . The defeated members had to carry the victorious members on their backs. . . . The party of Balarāma, accompanied by Śrīdāmā and Vṛṣabha, came out victorious, and Kṛṣṇa's party had to carry them on their backs through the Bhaṇḍīravana forest. . . . Pralambāsura, who appeared there as a cowherd boy, carried Balarāma on his back. . . .

"In order to avoid Kṛṣṇa, Pralambāsura carried Balarāma far away. The demon was undoubtedly very strong and powerful, but he was carrying Balarāma, who is compared to a mountain; therefore he began to feel the burden, and thus he assumed his real form. . . . At first, Balarāma was surprised by the demon's appearance, and He began to wonder, 'How is it that all of a sudden this carrier has changed in every way?' But with a clear mind He could quickly understand that He was being carried away from His friends by a demon who intended to kill Him. Immediately He struck the head of the demon with His strong fist, just as the king of the heavenly planets strikes a mountain with his thunderbolt. Being stricken by the fist of Balarāma, the demon fell down dead, just like a snake with a smashed head, and blood poured from his mouth. . . . All the boys then rushed to the spot. Being astonished by the ghastly scene, they began to praise Lord Balarāma" (*Kṛṣṇa*, pp. 170–172).

On another occasion Lord Kṛṣṇa pushed His flute into the ground here and created a well so that His friends could satisfy their thirst. This well is called Veṇu-kupa. If the new moon night (Amavasya) falls on a Monday, the water in the well turns white like milk and the local residents hold a big festival. It is also stated in the *Gopāla-campū* of Jīva Gosvāmī that Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa were married in Bhaṇḍīravana.



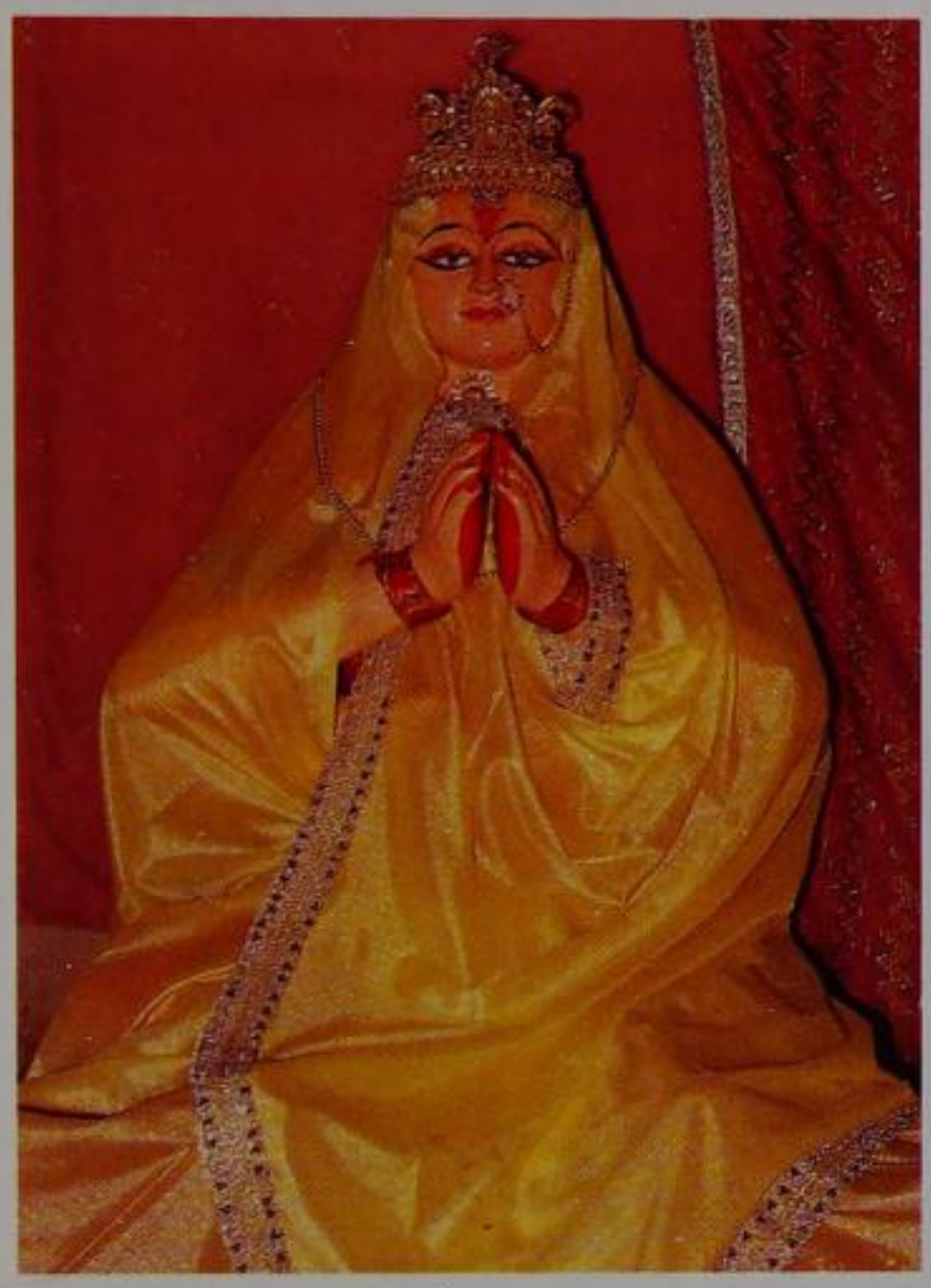
The famous well in Bhaṇḍīravana

"In the forest of Bhaṇḍīravana, my beautiful queen, proud Śrī Rādhā, started a wrestling competition among Her closest friends. When She eagerly wrestled with Lord Kṛṣṇa, She brought great happiness to the god of love. Let me worship that forest of Bhaṇḍīravana" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 93).

In Bhaṇḍīravana, the Deity of Kṛṣṇa applies kumkum to Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's forehead

Bilvavana (Śrīvana)

Lakṣmī, desiring to attain the position of the *gopīs* in Vṛndāvana, stays in this forest performing austerities. Previously there were many ball-shaped fruits called *bel* fruits in this



The Lakṣmī deity in Śrīvana

area, and Kṛṣṇa would come here with His friends for picnicking.

"O Lord, we do not know how the serpent Kāliya attained such an opportunity to be touched by the dust of Your lotus feet. Even the goddess of fortune, for this end, performed austerities for centuries, giving up all other desires and taking austere vows. Indeed, we do not know how the serpent Kāliya got such an opportunity" (*Bhāg.* 10.16.36).

Pañcakrośi Vṛndāvana

This is the town of Vṛndāvana, located six kilometers from the Delhi-Agra road and about seventy kilometers from the Taj Mahal in Agra. *Vṛndā* refers to Śrīmatī Tulasī-devī, and because *tulasī* plants grow in abundance here, the forest has been named after her. *Tulasī* leaves are very pleasing to Lord Kṛṣṇa and are used in various ways in Deity worship. Pañcakrośi Vṛndāvana is situated within the forest of Vṛndāvana, which extends thirty-two miles from the town of Vṛndāvana to Nandagrāma and Varṣāṇā. (The following holy places, through page 56, are located in or near the town of Vṛndāvana.)

Garuḍa-Govinda

Another Deity installed by Vajranābha, Garuḍa-Govinda reveals Kṛṣṇa riding on His winged carrier, Garuḍa. Kṛṣṇa is manifest here in a Viṣṇu form with twelve hands.

"A king is always accompanied by his ministers, secretaries and commanders, and Lord Kṛṣṇa is also accompanied by His followers —the demigods, great sages, saintly persons and so on. He is never alone. Consequently there is no question of the Lord's being impersonal. He is always Himself, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and His associates are also persons. Garuḍa appears to belong to the Kinnara planet. The inhabitants of the Kinnara planet have the same features as Garuḍa. Their bodily features are like those of a human being, but they have wings. These inhabitants of Kinnaraloka are very expert in singing the glories of the Lord. As they fly their wings vibrate the hymns of the *Vedas*" (*Bhāg.* 4.30.6, purport).

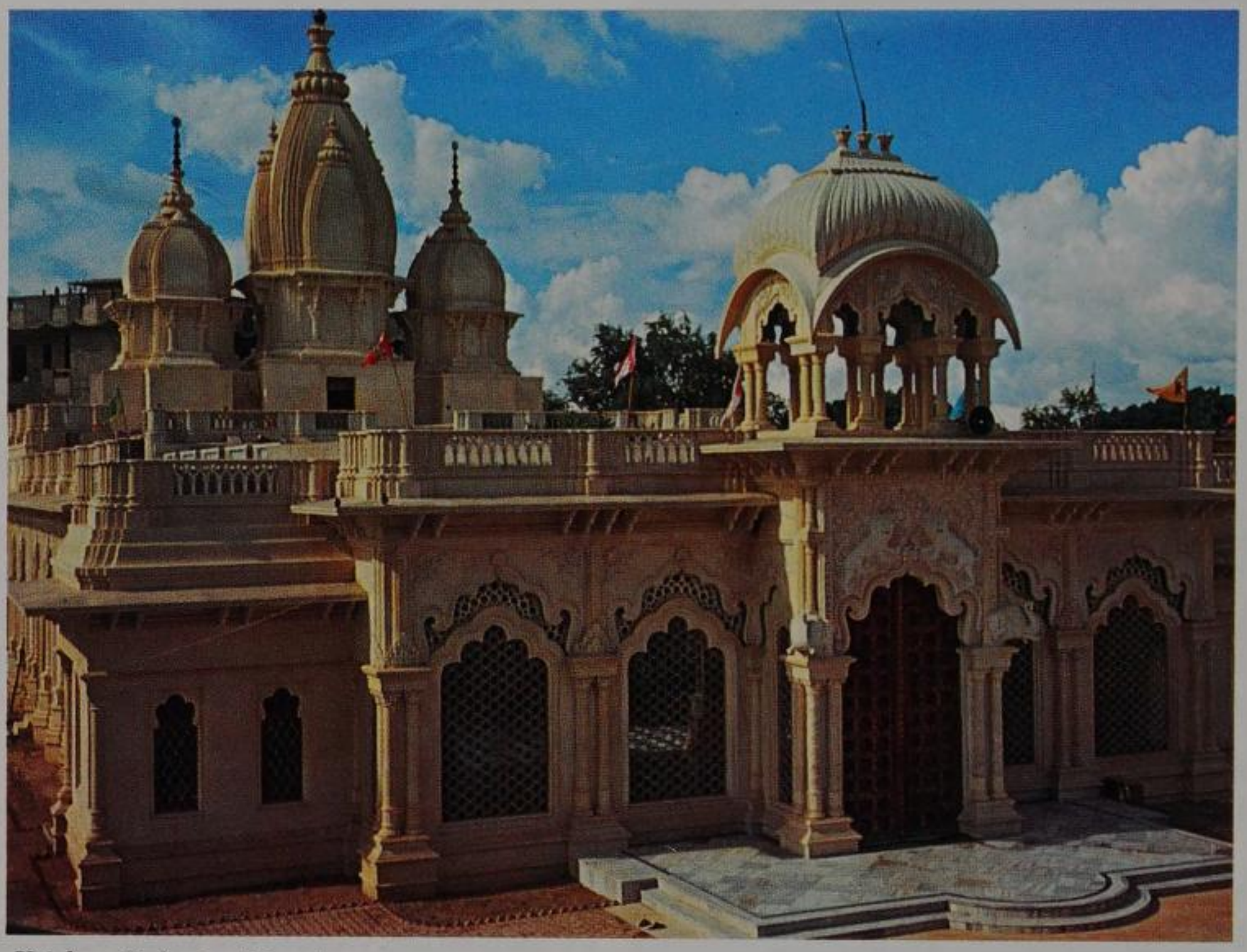
In His childhood, Kṛṣṇa once

Garuḍa-Govinda

climbed upon the back of Śrīdāmā, who had assumed the form of Garuḍa.

Krishna-Balarām Mandira

This temple has been described in the Introduction. It is located near the town of Vṛndāvana in a sandy area known as Ramaṇa-reti. Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma would come to this area to tend Their cows and play.



Krishna-Balarām Mandira

Kāliya-hrada

"When one takes a bath in Kāliya-hrada, he is freed from all sinful activities. One can also be successful in business by bathing in Kāliya-hrada" (*Bhakti-ratnākara*, Fifth Wave).

There was once a serpent named Kāliya who was living in the Yamunā River. "Due to poisonous vapors the trees and grass near the bank of the Yamunā had all dried up. Lord Kṛṣṇa saw the effect of the great serpent's poison; the whole river that ran before Vṛndāvana was now deadly.

"Kṛṣṇa, who advented Himself just to kill all undesirable elements in the world, immediately climbed up in a big *kadamba* tree on the bank of the Yamunā. After climbing to the top of the tree, He tightened His belt cloth, and, flapping His arms just like a wrestler, jumped into the poisonous lake" (*Kṛṣṇa*, pp. 155–156).

Kṛṣṇa and the Kāliya serpent fought within the Yamunā River. The Lord danced upon Kāliya's hoods and defeated him, but spared his life because of the sincere prayers of the *nāga-patnīs*, the great serpent's wives.

Kāliya-ghāṭa

"The *kadamba* tree from which Kṛṣṇa had jumped was the only tree which was not dead. Some commentators say that due to touching the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, the tree became immediately alive. In some other *Purāṇas* it is stated that Garuḍa, the eternal carrier of Viṣṇu, knew that Kṛṣṇa would take this action in the future, so he put some nectar on this tree to preserve it" (*Kṛṣṇa*, p. 156). In either case the same tree is still standing at Kāliya-ghāṭa.

Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī's Samādhi

Beginning in the year A.D. 1511, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu made a pilgrim's journey of the holy places in South India, where He gave His mercy to the devotees there. Starting from Jagannātha Purī, He first went to the Godāvarī River, and from there traveled to many holy places in what is now the state of Madras. On Śukla Ekādaśī in the month of Āṣādha, Śrīmān Mahāprabhu arrived at Raṅga-kṣetra, where He decided to stay and practice austerities during the four months of Cāturmāsya. In this way Lord Caitanya spent four months seeing the beautiful form of the Deity, Lord Raṅganātha, and preaching the message of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. At this time Lord Caitanya stayed at the home of three brothers: Tirumala, Veṅkaṭa (whose son was Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī), and Gopāla Guru (Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī), who were Śrī Vaiṣṇavas, followers of Rāmānujācārya, and devoted to the worship of Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa. Lord Caitanya explained the superiority of Lord Kṛṣṇa's *līlā* to His hosts, and their conversation on this point is recorded in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā,* Chapter Nine. At this time Gopala Guru (Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī) became very devoted to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and Veṅkaṭa's son, Gopāla, also became attached to the Lord. In his youth Gopāla Bhaṭṭa was instructed by Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī.

Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī became a follower of Śrī Caitanya and is considered one of the great *ācāryas* in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya*. Actually he is one of the great eternal associates of the Lord. When the Lord appeared in His original form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī was one of the important *gopīs*, Tuṅgavidyā-devī. This is described in the *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* (163). He has also been mentioned in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and *Bhakti-ratnākara*.

After Lord Caitanya left South India and returned to Jagannātha Purī in Orrisa, Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī became rapt in always remembering Him within his heart. Prabodhānanda left his home in Raṅga-kṣetra and traveled to Śrī Vṛndāvana, where he stayed in the forest of Kāmya-vana and where he was soon met by his nephew, Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī. His *samādhi* tomb is located on what was previously the bank of the Yamunā River near Kāliya-ghāṭa.

Dvadaśāditya-tilā and Praskandana

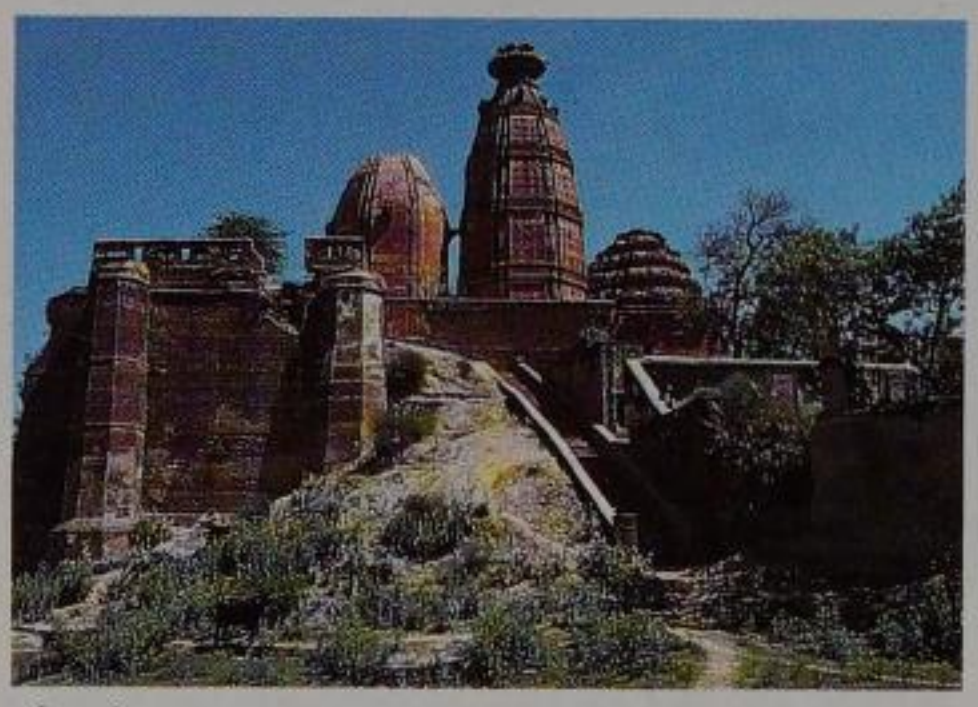
After subduing Kāliya in the Yamunā River, Kṛṣṇa climbed a nearby hill. He was feeling a bit chilly, so He rested in the sunshine. At that time twelve suns came to give warmth to Kṛṣṇa. Because of the intense heat Kṛṣṇa began to perspire, and the perspiration formed a *ghāṭa* at the bottom of the hill. The hill is known as Dvadaśāditya-tilā, and the *ghāṭa* is called Praskandana.

"Once, accompanied by the *gopas*, *gopīs*, and *surabhi* cows, the supremely opulent, noble, and magnanimous Lord Kṛṣṇa felt very uncomfortable in the cold. Twelve suns then appeared at that place and with great devotion warmed the Lord with their intense shining. I eternally take shelter of this

sacred place, which bears the name Dvadaśasūrya-tīrtha. When the twelve suns shone from every direction, perspiration fell from Lord Kṛṣṇa's transcendental body, and from this perspiration came a charming, splendid, clear lake bearing the sweet fragrance of the Lord's delicate, supremely handsome, and supremely opulent transcendental limbs. Bowing down, I worship this lake, known as Praskandana-sarovara" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 82, 83).

Rādhā-Madanamohana

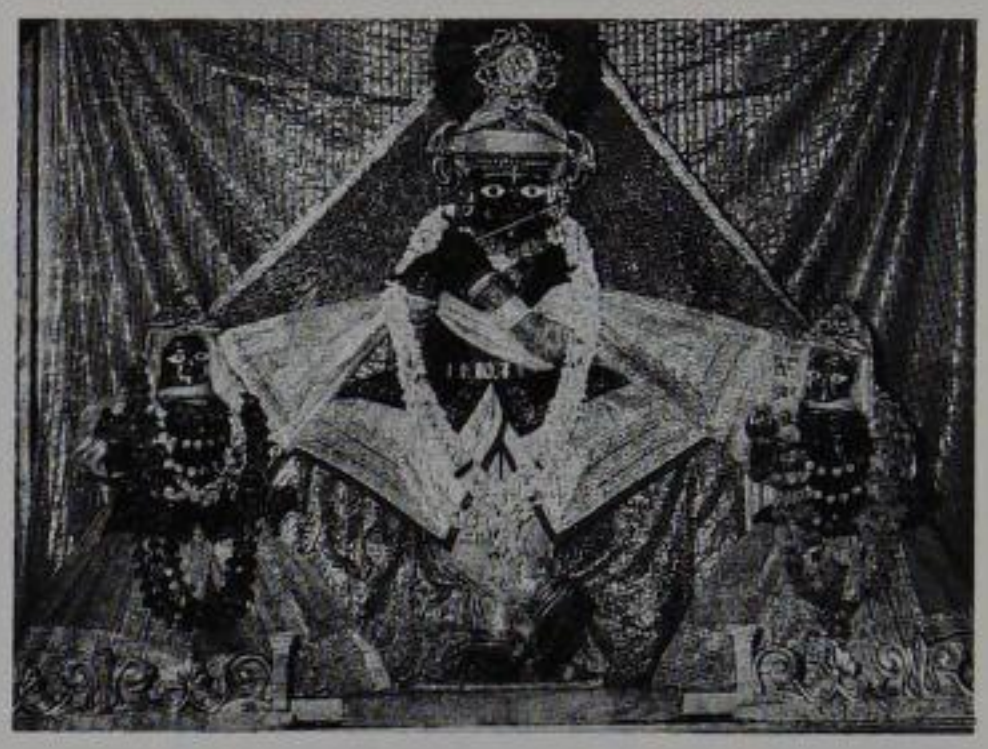
On Dvadaśāditya Hill Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī established the worship of Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Madanamohana. Sanātana had come to Vṛndāvana under the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and was performing *madhu-karī* (begging from door to door for his meals) in Mathurā. By Kṛṣṇa's will a *brāhmaṇa*



Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Madanamohana temple

named Puruṣottama Chaube gave Madanamohana to Sanātana Gosvāmī, who then brought the Deity back to Vṛndāvana. Some time later the Deity requested Sanātana Gosvāmī to offer some salt with the dry bread he had been offering, but Sanātana Gosvāmī replied that he was too busy with his *bhajana.*

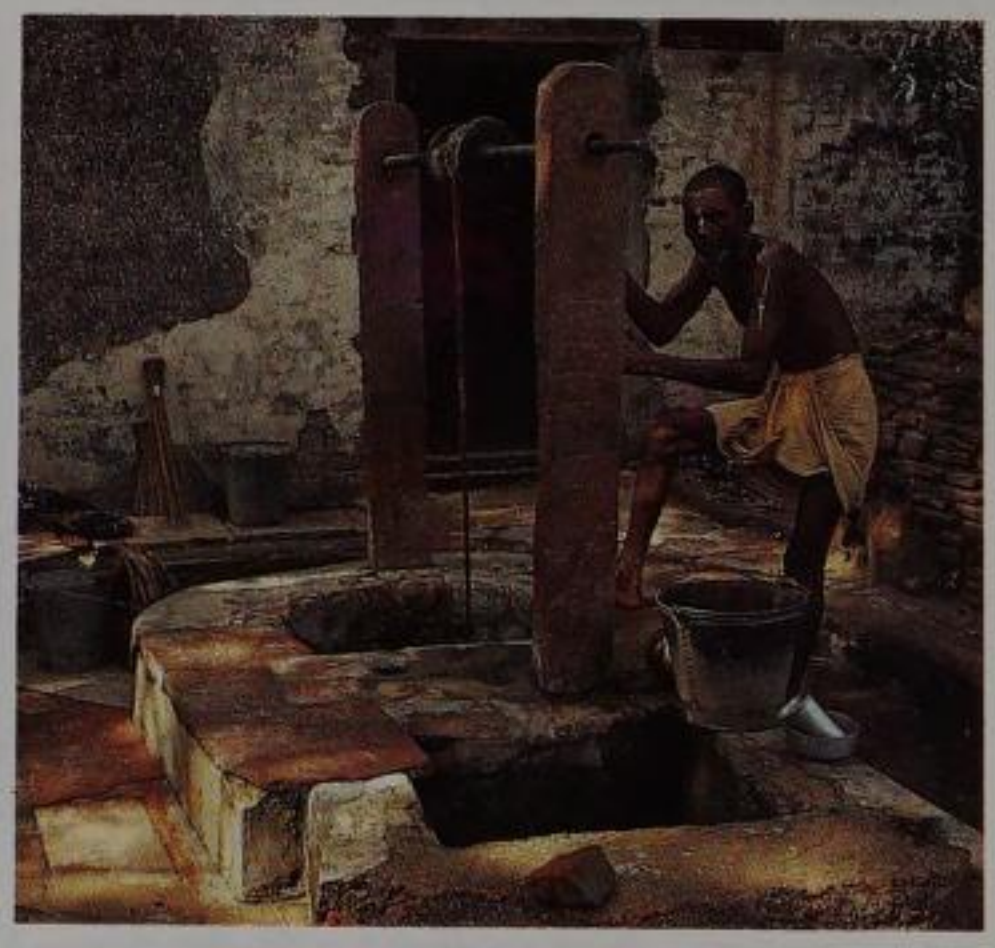
At that moment a large boat traveling from Delhi to Agra along the Yamunā River ran aground on the Dvadaśāditya Hill. It was a salt barge owned by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kapoor, who was in great distress because of this mishap. Lord Madanamohana took the form of a cowherd boy and led Kṛṣṇadāsa to Sanātana Gosvāmī, who then instructed him to worship Madanamohana in the form of the Deity. While offering prayers to the



Original Madanamohana Deity of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī

Deity his boat was released, and he proceeded to Agra, where he realized a nice profit. Kṛṣṇadāsa then returned to Sanātana Gosvāmī and under his direction constructed a temple for Madanamohana. This same temple is now in the care of the Indian government and is considered a historical site.

In A.D. 1670 the Deity was moved from Vṛndāvana to Jaipur with many other Deities because of the invasions of the Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb.



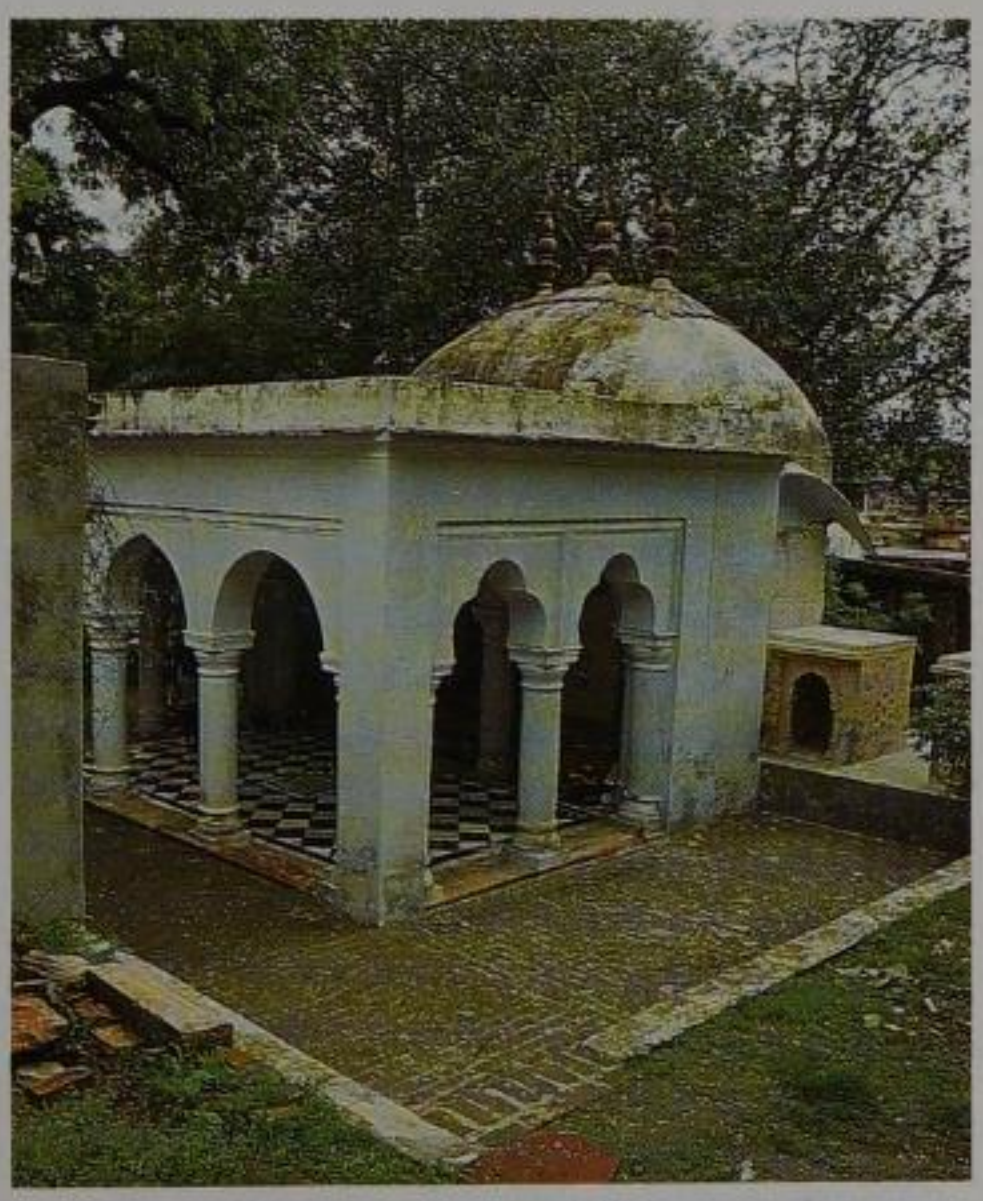
Sanātana Gosvāmī's well

After staying in Jaipur, Madanamohana was transferred to Karoli on the request of a Jaipur princess who had married a prince from Karoli. The King of Karoli built a nice temple for Rādhā-Madanamohana, who has remained there ever since.

"Glory to the all-merciful Rādhā and Madanamohana! I am lame and ill advised, yet They are my directors, and Their lotus feet are everything to me" (Cc. *Ādi* 1.15).

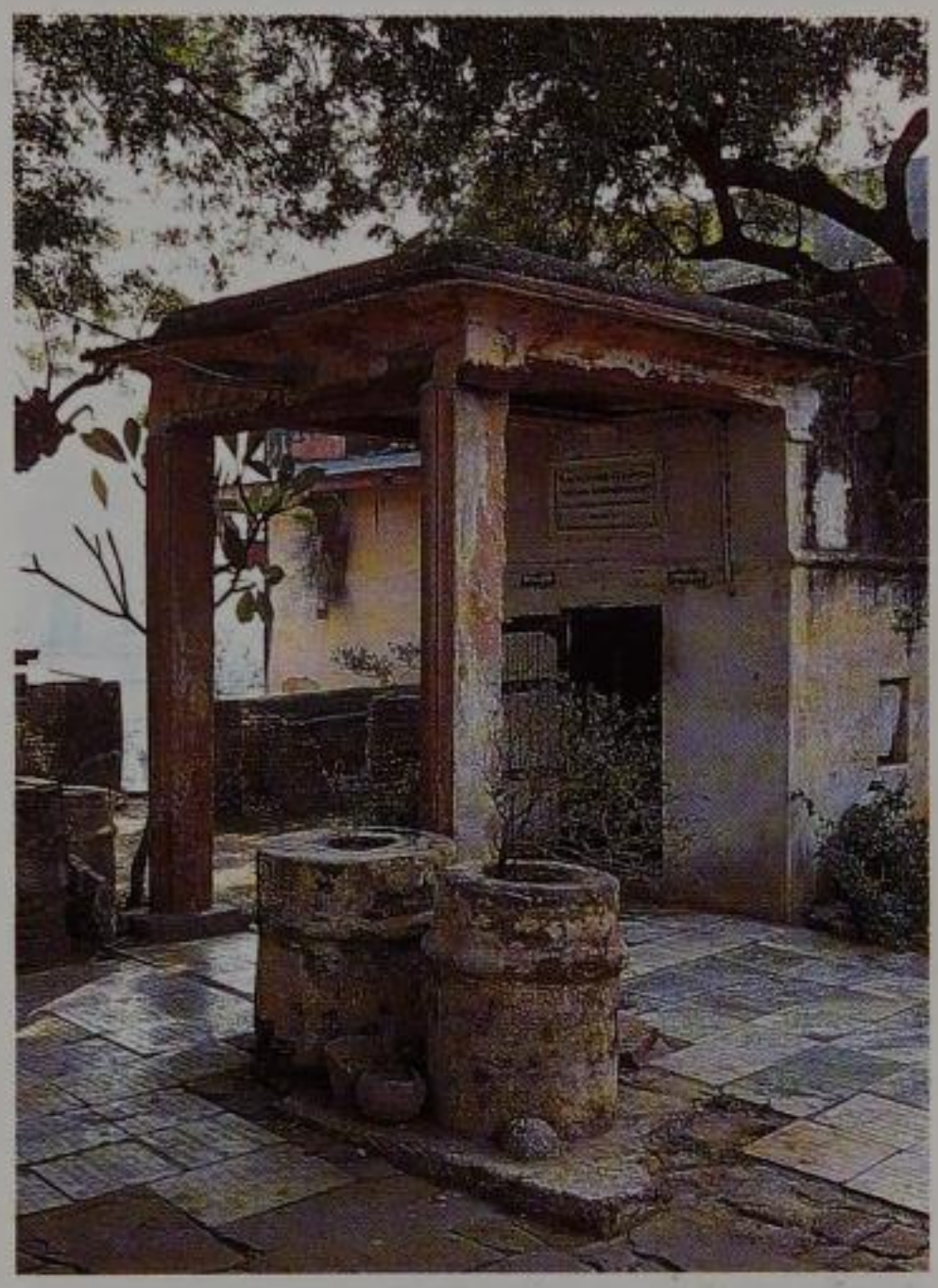
Sanātana Gosvāmī's Samādhi

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī was born into the *sārasvata-brāhmaṇa* community in Bengal but was ostracized due to his acceptance of a ministerial post in the government of Hussain Shah. He served in the Muslim government and was a high-ranking officer, but after meeting Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu he quit his post and was imprisoned



Sanātana Gosvāmī's samādhi

by the Nawab. With the help of some money left by his brother (Srīla Rūpa Gosvāmī), he was freed from jail and fled from the country. Sanātana Gosvāmī later met Caitanya Mahāprabhu again in Benares and was instructed by Him in the science of devotional service, *bhakti-yoga*. He then came to Vṛndāvana and spent his time chanting, writing books, and worshiping the Deity. Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī is described in the *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* (181). He was formerly known as Rati-mañjarī or sometimes Lavaṅga-mañjarī. Some of the books compiled by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī were *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*,



Sanātana Gosvāmī's bhajana-kuṭir

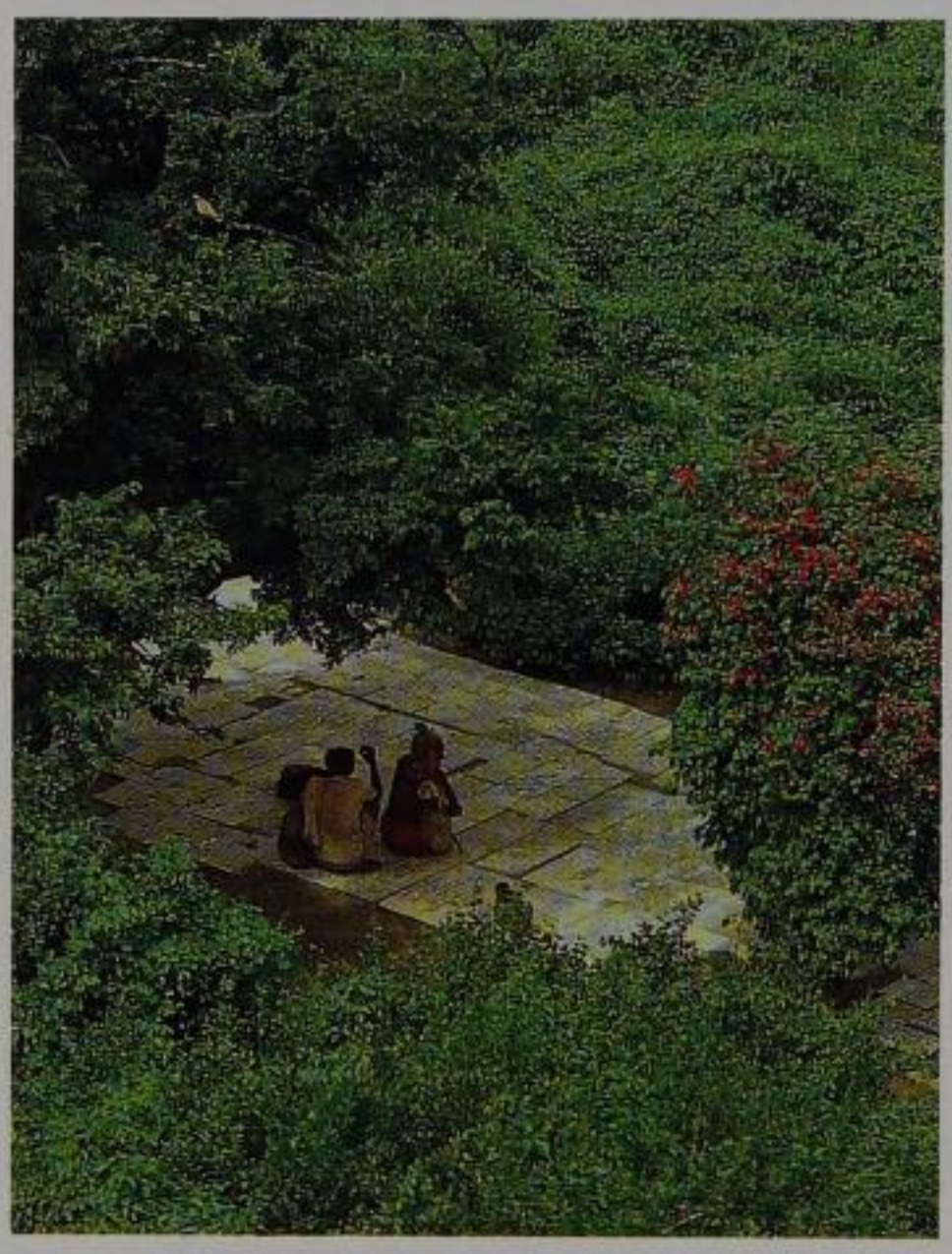
Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta, *Daśama-ṭippanī* and *Daśama-carita*.

There are several places throughout the Vraja area where Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī performed his *bhajana*, but the last days of his life were spent at Govardhana Hill. He departed from this world on Guru Pūrṇimā, while residing at Govardhana. His body was brought to Vṛndāvana and placed in *samādhi* behind the Rādhā-Madanamohana Mandira. Just behind his *samādhi* is a *grantha-samādhi*, which contains some of the original manuscripts of the Gosvāmīs.

Sevā-kuñja

In this garden Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa perform Their eternal *līlā* every night.

Therefore each evening at sunset everyone leaves the grove. It is said that Kṛṣṇa would decorate Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's hair with flowers, massage Her feet, and offer other services to His most beloved *gopī* here in this sacred area. Once, when Lalitā-sakhī was thirsty, Lord Kṛṣṇa created a well by pushing His flute into the ground. The well is still there within the central part of the gardens.

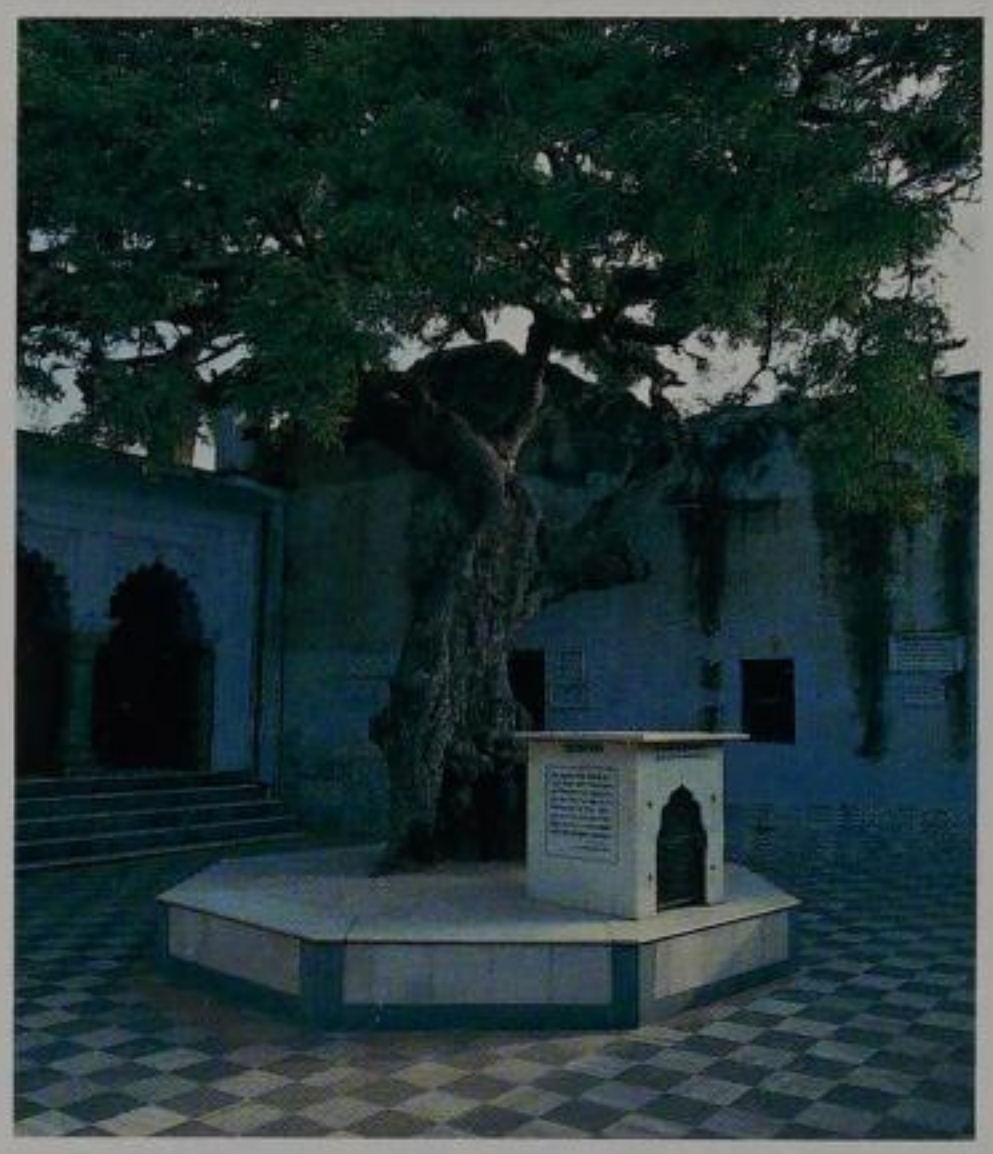


Sevā-kuñja

Imlītala

Imlī means "tamarind." This tamarind tree dates back as far as Lord Kṛṣṇa's time, five thousand years ago. Kṛṣṇa would come here on the banks of the Yamunā River, and because of ecstatic feelings of separation from Rādhārāṇī, His blackish body would turn golden. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu would also come here and meditate upon Kṛṣṇa. Caitanya Mahāprabhu took on the sentiments of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī during His *līlā*, and when He was sitting here His golden body would sometimes turn blackish due to ecstatic love.

There is a Gauḍīya Maṭha temple here, established by His Holiness Bhaktisāraṅga Mahārāja, a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. Bhaktisāraṅga Mahārāja's *samādhi* is next to the tree.



Imlītala

Rādhā-Dāmodara

This temple was established by Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, the nephew of Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana. He was the son of their brother, Anupama. Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī installed the Deity of Lord Dāmodara in A.D. 1542. He then requested Jīva Gosvāmī to take care of the worship. The Dāmodara form refers to Kṛṣṇa in His childhood when He was tied up with a rope by His mother, Yaśodā. *Dāma* means "ropes," and *udara* means "abdomen." Mother Yaśodā, being very disturbed by naughty Kṛṣṇa, once bound Him round the abdomen with a rope, and thus Kṛṣṇa is named Dāmodara.

Other Deities worshiped here are Rādhā-Vṛndāvana-candra of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, Rādhā-Mādhava of Jayadeva Gosvāmī, and Rādhā-Chalacikana of Bhūgarbha Gosvāmī. The original Deities have all been moved to Jaipur. When the Deity is moved, the Deity that takes the place of the original is called the *pratibhū-mūrti* and is considered as

good as the original Deity.

Also located in the temple here is a *govardhana-śilā* given to Sanātana Gosvāmī by Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself. When Sanātana Gosvāmī was elderly, it was very difficult for him to circumambulate Govardhana Hill, a distance of twenty-one kilometers. Kṛṣṇa gave him the *śilā,* telling him that if he circumambulated the *śilā* it was as good as circumambulating Govardhana Hill. For a couple of rupees the *pūjārī* will allow special *darśana,* and one can see the marks of Kṛṣṇa's footprint, walking stick, and flute, and the hoofprint of a calf imbedded within the *śilā.*

In the courtyard of the temple there are rooms for residence on either side. On the eastern side are the rooms where Śrīla A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda resided before leaving India and traveling to New York in 1965. While staying here Śrīla Prabhupāda translated, wrote commentary on, and printed three volumes of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* He stayed here for nearly six years, often traveling to Delhi for preaching and printing. His small kitchen has a

Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Dāmodara

window overlooking the *samādhi* of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. Śrīla Prabhupāda often said he received great inspiration from Rūpa Gosvāmī.

The Gosvāmīs would meet here at Rādhā-Dāmodara Manḍira and plan how to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

The *samādhis* of Jīva Gosvāmī, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī, and Bhūgarbha Gosvāmī are within the temple compound.

Jīva Gosvāmī's Samādhi

"In the *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* it is said that Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī was formerly Vilāsa-mañjarī *gopī.* From his very childhood Jīva Gosvāmī was greatly fond of *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam.* He later came to Navadvīpa to study Sanskrit, and, following in the footsteps of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, he circumambulated the entire Navadvīpa-dhāma. After visiting Navadvīpa-dhāma he went to Benares to study Sanskrit under Madhusūdana Vācaspati, a disciple of Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, and after finishing his studies in Benares, he went to Vṛndāvana and took shelter of his uncles, Śrī Rūpa and Sanātana. This is described in the *Bhakti-ratnākara.* . . .

"After the disappearance of Śrīla Rūpa and Sanātana Gosvāmī in Vṛndāvana, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī became the *ācārya* of all the Vaiṣṇavas in Bengal, Orissa and the rest of the world, and it is he who used to guide them in their devotional service. In Vṛndāvana he established the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple. . . . When Jīva Gosvāmī was still present, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī compiled his famous *Caitanya-caritāmṛta.* Later, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī inspired Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, and Duḥkhī Kṛṣṇadāsa to preach Kṛṣṇa consciousness in Bengal. Jīva Gosvāmī was informed that all the manuscripts that were collected from Vṛndāvana and sent to Bengal for preaching purposes were plundered near Viṣṇupura in Bengal, but later he received the information that the books had been recovered. Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī awarded the designation *kavirāja* to Rāmacandra Sena, a disciple of Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, and his younger brother Govinda. While Jīva

Gosvāmī was alive, Śrīmatī Jāhnavā-devī, the pleasure potency of Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu, went to Vṛndāvana with a few devotees. Jīva Gosvāmī was very kind to the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, the Vaiṣṇavas from Bengal. Whoever went to Vṛndāvana he provided with a residence and *prasādam.* His disciple Kṛṣṇadasa Adhikārī listed all the books of the Gosvāmīs in his diary" (Cc. *Ādi* 10.85, purport).

Nityānanda-vaṭa (Śṛngāra-vaṭa)

Before meeting Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in Navadvīpa, Lord Nityānanda traveled throughout India to various holy places. While visiting Vṛndāvana Lord Nityānanda stayed here. It is said in the *Bhakti-ratnākara* that He always stays here, enjoying pastimes in the mood of Lord Balarāma. Here Lord Kṛṣṇa would decorate (*sṛṅgāra*) Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī with valuable jewels and fine cloth.

Rādhā-Śyāmasundara

These are the Deities of Śyāmānanda Prabhu, previously known as Duḥkhī Kṛṣṇadāsa, and this is one of the seven major temples of Vṛndāvana. Duḥkhī Kṛṣṇadāsa came to Vṛndāvana from Bengal and was a follower of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, although he was initiated by Hṛdaya Caitanya.

While sweeping the ground one day, Duḥkhī Kṛṣṇadāsa found an anklet that had a transcendental effulgence. A small girl came looking for the anklet, claiming that it belonged to her sister. Duḥkhī Kṛṣṇadāsa refused to give the ornament to anyone but the owner, knowing the owner to be Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. The small girl, who was actually Lalitā-sakhī, left and returned a short time later with Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, who blessed Duḥkhī Kṛṣṇadāsa with Her divine *darśana.* She then took the anklet and pressed it against his forehead, producing a *tilaka* mark.

When Duḥkhī Kṛṣṇadāsa appeared before the other Vaiṣṇavas wearing the new *tilaka,* they criticized him, but Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī appeared in a dream to Jīva Gosvāmī and explained everything. Jīva Gosvāmī then praised Duḥkhī Kṛṣṇadāsa's transcendental qualities and gave him the name Śyāmānanda.

Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Śyāmasundara

Śyāmānanda Prabhu was very instrumental in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the state of Orissa. He, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, and Śrīnivāsa Ācārya were second generation Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, and they brought the teachings of the Gosvāmīs out of Vṛndāvana to propagate Lord Caitanya's philosophy. They underwent extreme hardships for this cause, and therefore we prostrate ourselves before them and beg for their mercy.

Śyāmānanda's *samādhi* is across the road from the entrance to the Rādhā-Śyāmasundara Mandira.

Nidhivana

This is another small grove, similar to Sevā-kuñjā, wherein Rādhā and

Kṛṣṇa perform Their evening *līlā*. *Nidhi* translates as "sleep." When the divine couple are fatigued from dancing and other conjugal activities, They retire in this area. There is a temple in the garden, known as the "sleeping temple," that has a bed for the divine couple.

A contemporary of the six Gosvāmīs, Haridāsa Svāmī, discovered the Deity of Baṅkī-bihārī here. Haridāsa's *samādhi* is near the entrance to Nidhivana.

Rādhā-ramaṇa

While Lord Caitanya was traveling through South India, He spent four months of the rainy season in the house of Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa in Śrī Raṅgam. Veṅkaṭa Bhaṭṭa's son, Gopāla, performed menial tasks for Lord Caitanya and accepted the remnants of His food. Thus his attraction for the Lord grew day by day. By the order of the Lord he remained at home until the passing of his parents.

Gopāla then proceeded to Vṛndāvana, where he became like a younger brother to Rūpa and Sanātana. He worshiped twelve

Rādhā-ramaṇa

śālagrāma-śilās and was always absorbed in devotional service. On the Pūrṇimā day in the month of Vaiśākha in the year A.D. 1542 one of his *śālagrāmas* (Dāmodara) self-manifested into Kṛṣṇa's three-fold bending form holding a flute. This self-manifest Deity is Rādhā-ramaṇa.

Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī's Samādhi

Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī compiled a book called *Sat-kriyā-sāra-dīpikā,* edited *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa,* and wrote the original draft of *Ṣaṭ-sandarbha* and a commentary on *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta.* In the *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā,* verse 184, it is mentioned that his previous name in the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa was Anaṅga-mañjarī. Sometimes he is also said to have been an incarnation of Guṇa-mañjarī. Śrīnivāsa Ācārya and Gopinātha Pūjārī were two of his disciples. His spiritual master was his uncle, the great *sannyāsī* Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī. Formerly they belonged to the disciplic succession of the Rāmānuja-sampradāya but later became part of the Gauḍīya-sampradāya. Gopāla Bhaṭṭa's *samādhi* is within the compound of the Rādhā-ramaṇa Mandira.

Rādhā-Gokulānanda

Like the Rādhā-Dāmodara temple, this temple has many Deities being worshiped. The small Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa Deities, named Rādhā-vinoda, are those of Lokanātha Gosvāmī. The larger Deities are Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's Vijaya-govinda. The small Kṛṣṇa in the front is Gokulānanda of Viśvanātha Cakravartī, and the Deity of Caitanya Mahāprabhu was worshiped by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura.

Caitanya Mahāprabhu gave a *govardhana-śilā* to Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, and this can be seen if one offers a small donation. The *śilā* bears the thumbprint of Lord Caitanya, who used to chant while holding the *śilā,* pressing it to His heart or eyes. Sometimes He would smell it or place it on His head. The stone was always moist with Lord Caitanya's tears. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu would say,

Rādhā-Gokulānanda

"This stone is directly the body of Lord Kṛṣṇa." Lord Caitanya kept the *śilā* for three years and then gave it to Raghunātha dāsa, being greatly satisfied by his behavior.

Govardhana-śīlā of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī

Samādhis of Lokanātha Gosvāmī, Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura

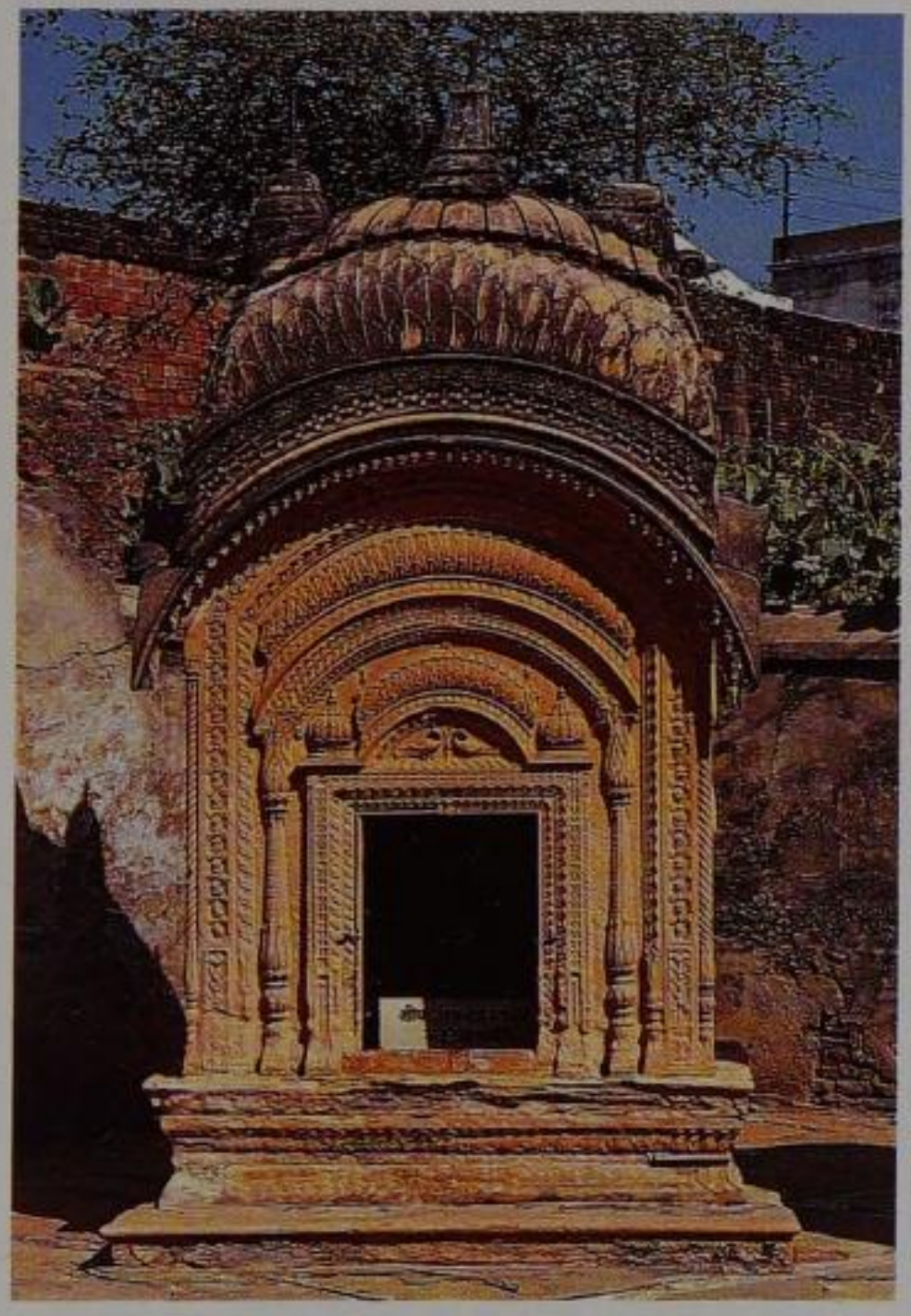
All of these *samādhis* are located in a small courtyard just outside the Rādhā-Gokulānanda Mandira. Lokanātha Gosvāmī was a contemporary of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and when the Lord took *sannyāsa*, Lokanātha came to Vṛndāvana, where he performed very strict *bhajana.* He was always meek and humble.

When young Narottama dāsa came to Vṛndāvana to study under the Gosvāmīs, he was attracted by this saintly person. Lokanātha, however, did not want to accept disciples and refused repeated requests from Narottama. But Narottama was very determined. He acted as the menial servant of Lokanātha Gosvāmī, who was finally pleased with Narottama's behavior and accepted him as his only disciple.

Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, Śyāmānanda Prabhu, and Śrīnivāsa Ācārya, by the order of Jīva Gosvāmī, took the original manuscripts written by the Gosvāmīs to Bengal so they could be copied. These three devotees preached the teachings of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu vigorously, spreading the philosophy of *acintya-bhedābheda-tattva.* About one hundred years later Viśvanātha Cakravartī appeared on the scene and with his writings elaborated the philosophical

Lokanātha Gosvāmī's samādhi

Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura's samādhi

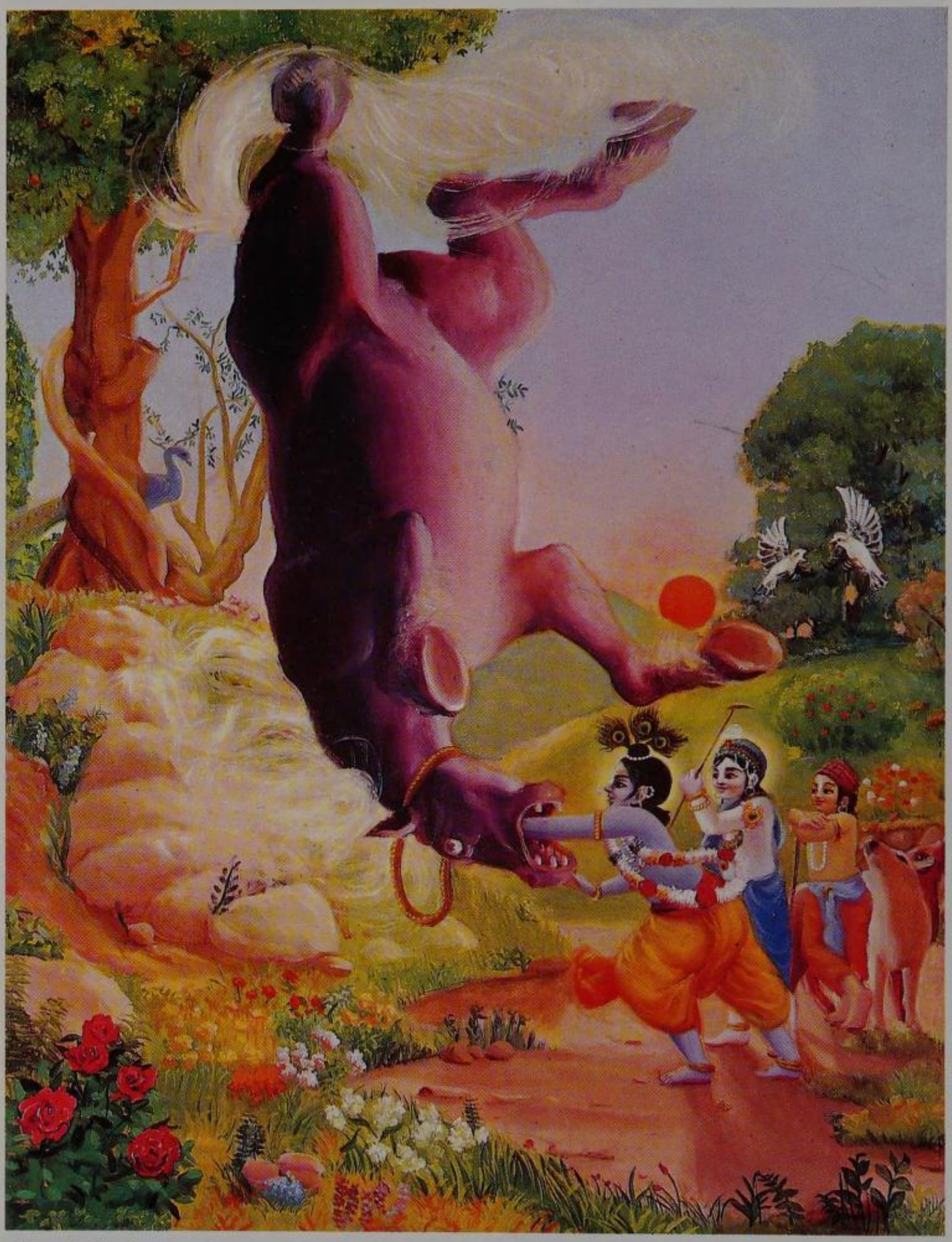


Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's samādhi

doctrine founded by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He is especially empowered as an *ācārya* in the *mādhurya-rasa,* or mellow of conjugal love.

Keśī-ghāṭa

"After being instructed by Kaṁsa, the demon Keśī assumed the form of a terrible horse. He entered the area of Vṛndāvana, his great mane flying and his hooves digging up the earth. He began to whinny and terrify the whole world. Kṛṣṇa saw that the demon was terrifying all the residents of Vṛndāvana with his whinnying and his tail wheeling in the sky like a big cloud. Kṛṣṇa could understand that the horse was challenging Him to fight. The Lord accepted his challenge and stood before the Keśī demon. As He called him to fight, the horse began to proceed toward Kṛṣṇa, making a horrible sound like a roaring lion. Keśī rushed toward the Lord with great speed and tried to trample Him with his legs, which were strong, forceful, and as hard as stone. Kṛṣṇa, however, immediately caught hold of his legs and thus baffled him. Being somewhat angry, Kṛṣṇa began to move around the horse dexterously. After a few rounds, He



Kṛṣṇa kills the Keśī demon, who had challenged Him to fight after having terrified the residents of Vrndāvana

threw him a hundred yards away, just as Garuḍa throws a big snake. Thrown by Kṛṣṇa, the horse immediately passed out, but after a little while he regained consciousness and with great anger and force rushed toward Kṛṣṇa again, this time with his mouth open. As soon as Keśī reached Him, Kṛṣṇa pushed His left hand within the horse's mouth. The horse felt great pain because the hand of Kṛṣṇa felt to him like a hot iron rod. Immediately his teeth fell out. Kṛṣṇa's hand within the mouth of the horse at once began to inflate, and Keśī's

the three worlds tremble, and with the wild rolling of his eyes he set the entire universe in flames. Kṛṣṇa killed this demon as easily as one splits a blade of grass and then washed the blood from His hands at a place now known as Keśī-tīrtha. I worship that sacred place" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 85).

Rādhā-Gopīnātha

"Śrī Śrīla Gopinātha, who originated the transcendental mellow of the *rāsa* dance, stands on the shore in Vaṁśī-vaṭa and attracts the attention of the cowherd damsels with the

Keśī-ghāṭa

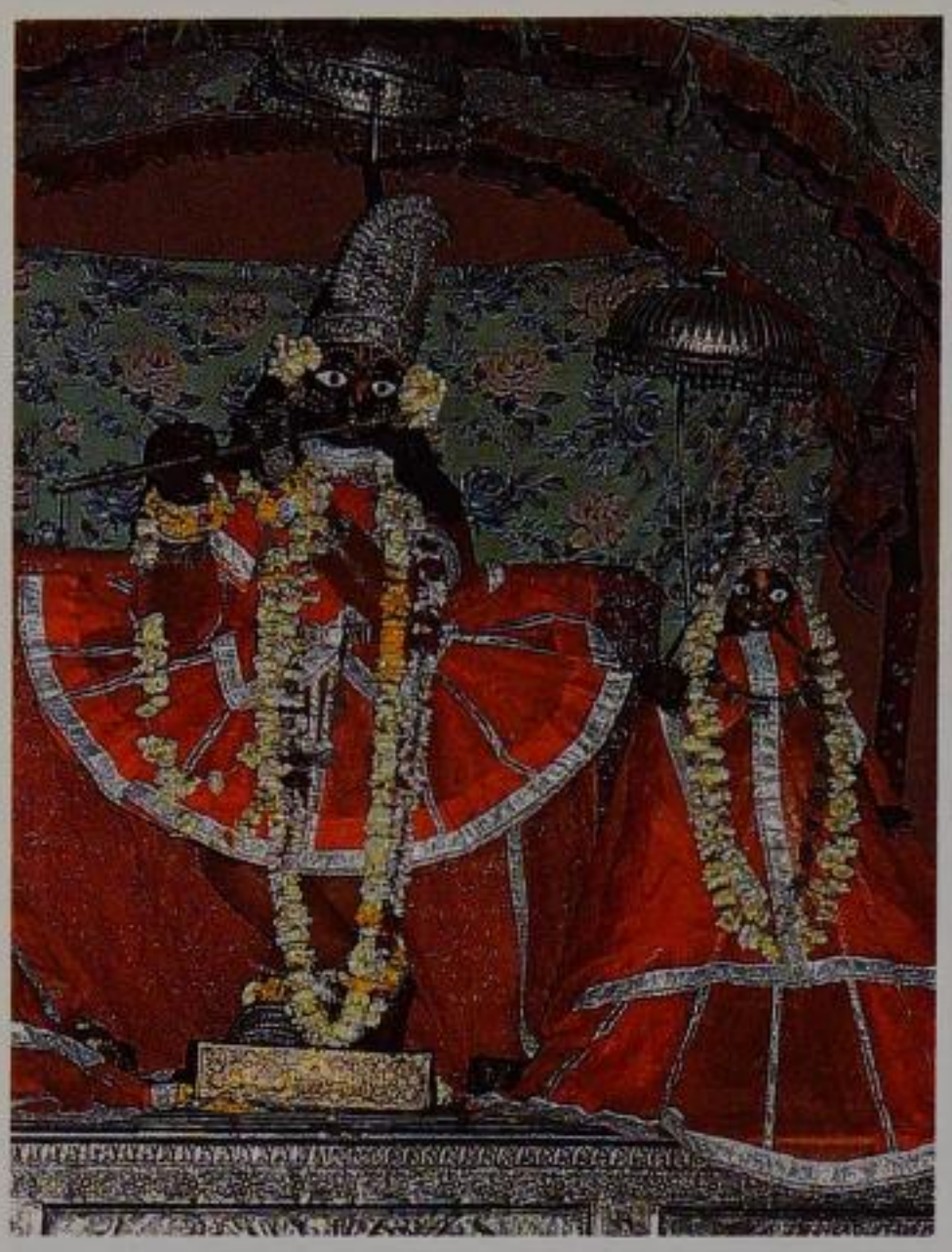
throat choked up. As the great horse began to suffocate, perspiration appeared on his body, and he began to throw his legs hither and thither. As his last breath came, his eyeballs bulged in their sockets, and he passed stool and urine simultaneously. Thus the vital force of his life expired. When the horse was dead, his mouth became loose and Kṛṣṇa could extract His hand without difficulty. He did not feel any surprise that the Keśī demon was killed so easily, but the demigods were amazed, and out of their great appreciation they offered Kṛṣṇa greetings by showering flowers" (*Kṛṣṇa*, pp. 301–302).

"With his mad neighing Keśī made

sound of His celebrated flute. May They all confer upon us Their benediction" (Cc. *Ādi* 1.17).

The original Deity of Gopīnātha was installed by Vajranābha. Paramānanda Bhaṭṭācārya discovered the Deity in the earth at Vaṁśī-vaṭa and entrusted the worship to his disciple Madhu Paṇḍita, who soon constructed a temple. Like many other Deities in Vṛndāvana, however, Gopīnātha was transferred to Jaipur in fear of Mohammedan invasions.

"In the process of establishing our relationship with Kṛṣṇa there are three stages: *sambandha, abhidheya,* and *prayojana.* The three Deities—



Rādhā-Gopinātha

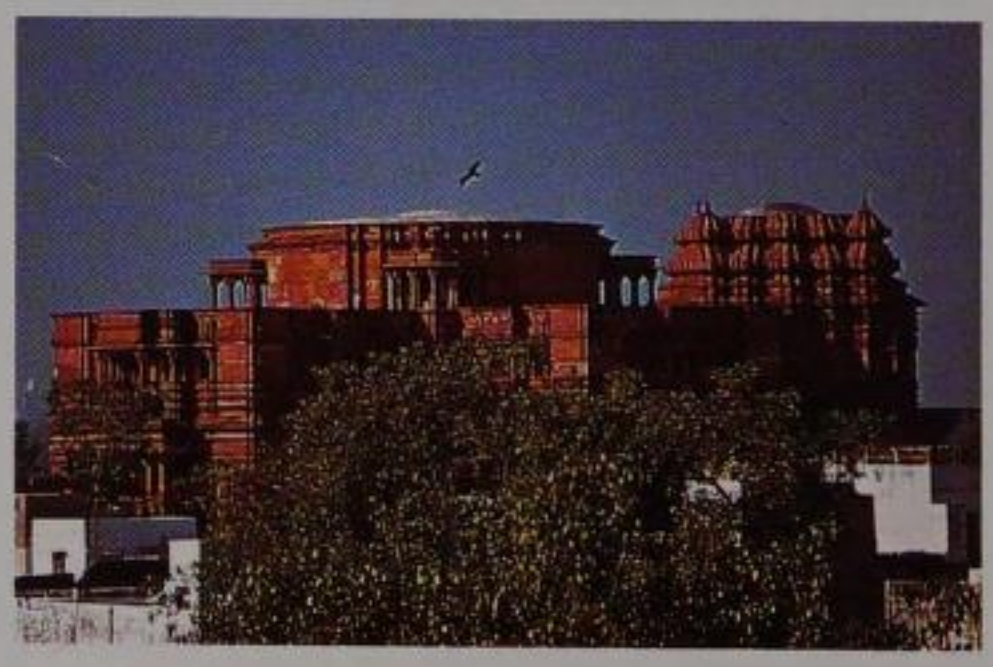
Madanamohana, Govinda, and Gopīnātha—have very specific qualities. Worship of Madanamohana is on the platform of restablishing our forgotten relationship with the Personality of Godhead [*sambandha*]. In the material world we are presently in utter ignorance of our eternal relationship with the Supreme Lord; therefore it is best not to aspire for success in fruitive activities or mental speculation, but instead simply to surrender to the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The perfection of life is simply to surrender to the Supreme. In the beginning of our spiritual life we must therefore worship Madanamohana so that He may attract us and nullify our attachment for material sense gratification. This relationship with Madanamohana is necessary for neophyte devotees. When one wishes to render service to the Lord with strong attachment, one then worships Govinda on the platform of transcendental service [*abhidheya*]. Govinda is the reservoir of all pleasures. When by the grace of Kṛṣṇa and the devotees one reaches perfection in devotional service [*prayojana*], he can appreciate Kṛṣṇa as Gopīnātha or Gopījana-vallabha, the pleasure Deity of the damsels of Vraja" (Cc. *Ādi* 1.19, purport).

Rādhā-Govinda

"In a temple of jewels in Vṛndāvana, underneath a desire tree, Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Govinda, served by Their most confidential associates, sit upon an effulgent throne. I offer my humble obeisances unto Them" (Cc. *Ādi* 1.16).

Rūpa Gosvāmī, feeling separation because of being unable to find the Deity of Govinda, sat under a tree on the bank of the Yamunā. At that time a beautiful young boy came and told him of a hill where a cow went every day and poured milk into a hole. The young boy then disappeared. Rūpa Gosvāmī went to the hill and discovered Govinda buried in the earth. He then excavated the Deity and established His worship.

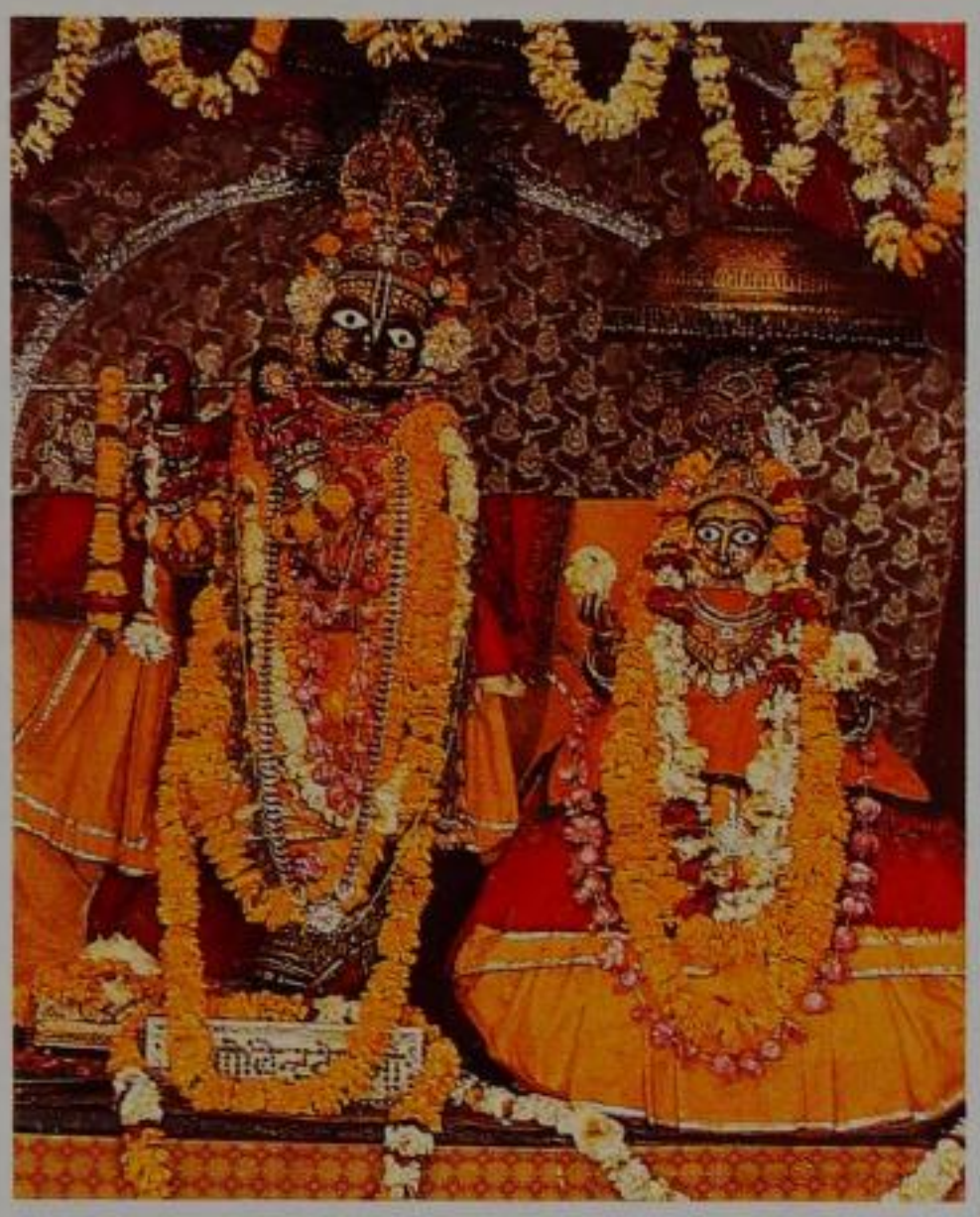
Govindajī's Rādhārāṇī was previously in Jagannātha Purī, but the



Rādhā-Govinda temple

son of King Pratapārudra, Puruṣottama, transferred Her to Vṛndāvana, where She was installed next to Govinda. She was the first Rādhārāṇī Deity worshiped by the Gosvāmīs in Vṛndāvana.

This magnificent temple was built in A.D. 1590 by Raja Man Singh, a general in the court of Akbar and a disciple of Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa



Rādhā-Govinda

Gosvāmī. The temple was originally seven stories high, and atop the temple burned a large ghee lamp. From Agra, Aurangzeb saw the majestic lamp and, infuriated by the greatness of this "Hindu" temple, sent troops to demolish it. The Mohammedan soldiers were able to dismantle the top four stories of the seven-story temple. During the attack the Deities were moved to Jaipur, where They remain

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's deity of Yogamāyā

today.

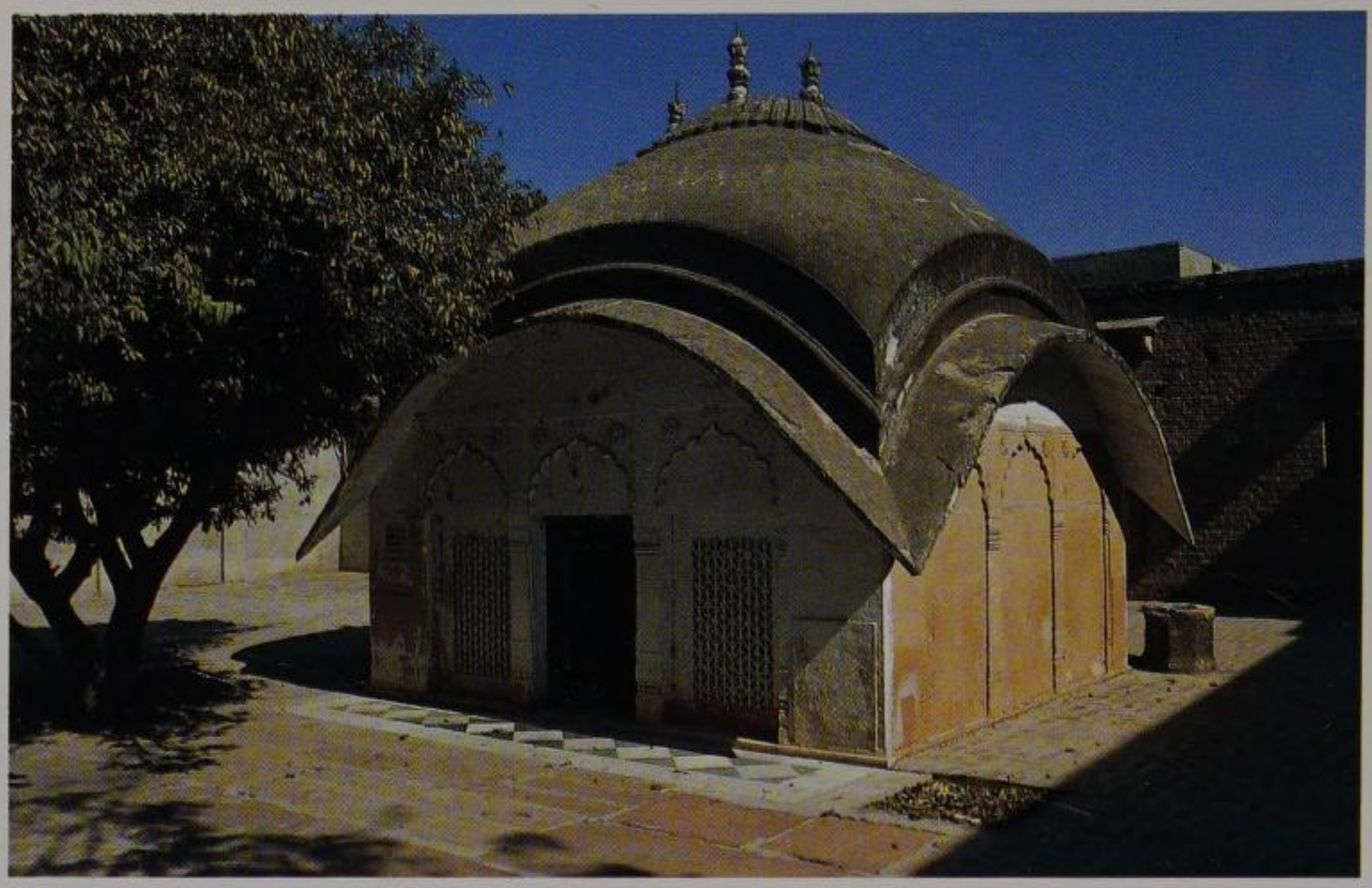
A small *mūrti* of Yogamāyā was hidden during the attack and now resides in an underground complex in the southwestern chapel. One can see her with the permission of the *pūjārīs.*

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī

"In the *Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā* (180) Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī is described as the *gopī* named Śrī Rūpa-mañjarī. In the *Bhakti-ratnākara* there is a list of the books Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī compiled. Of all his books, the following sixteen

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī

are very popular among Vaiṣṇavas: (1) *Haṁsadūta,* (2) *Uddhava-sandeśa,* (3) *Kṛṣṇa-janma-tithi-vidhi,* (4 and 5) *Rādhā-kṛṣṇa-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā, Bṛhat-*(major) and *Laghu-*(minor), (6) *Stava-mālā,* (7) *Vidagdha-mādhava,* (8) *Lalitā-mādhava,* (9) *Dāna-keli-kaumudī,* (10) *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (this is the most celebrated book by Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī), (11) *Ujjvala-nīlamaṇi,* (12) *Ākhyāta-candrikā,* (13) *Mathurā-māhātmya,* (14) *Padyāvali,* (15) *Naṭaka-candrikā* and (16) *Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta.* Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī



Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's samādhi

gave up all family connections, joined the renounced order of life and divided his money, giving fifty percent to the *brāhmaṇas* and Vaiṣṇavas, twenty-five percent to his *kutumbas* (family members) and keeping twenty-five percent for personal emergencies. He met Haridāsa Ṭhākura at Jagannātha Purī, where he also met Lord Caitanya and His other associates. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu used to praise the handwriting of Rūpa Gosvāmī, stating that it was like a row of pearls. Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī could compose verses according to the desires of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and by His direction he wrote two books named *Lalitā-mādhava* and *Vidagdha-mādhava*" (Cc. *Ādi* 10.84, purport).

He was a very learned scholar and was proficient in Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, and Bengali. As mentioned previously, his *samādhi* is located in the courtyard of the Rādhā-Dāmodara Mandira.

"By offering Her betel nuts, by massaging Her feet, by bringing Her water, by arranging for Her secret meeting with Lord Kṛṣṇa, and by performing many other services, many *gopī* maidservants affectionately please Śrī Rādhā, the great queen of Vṛndāvana forest. When the divine couple enjoy Their pastimes, these maidservants are not at all shy, even in the presence of the great *gopīs* for whom Śrī Rādhā is more dear than life. I take shelter of these *gopīs* maidservants, who have Śrīmatī Rūpa-mañjarī as their leader" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 38).

Akrūra-ghāṭa

When Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma left Nandagrāma to go to Mathurā, They were accompanied by Their uncle Akrūra. He drove the chariot with great speed toward the banks of the Yamunā.

"Simply by taking a bath in the Yamunā, anyone can diminish the reaction of his sinful activities. Both Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma took Their baths in the river and washed Their faces. After drinking the transparent crystal-clear water of the Yamunā, They took Their seats again on the chariot. The chariot was standing underneath the shade of big trees, and both brothers sat down there. Akrūra then took

Their permission to also take bath in the Yamunā. . . . While standing in the river, Akrūra suddenly saw both Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa within the water. He was surprised to see Them there because he was confident that They were sitting on the chariot. Confused, he immediately came out of the water and went to see where the boys were, and he was very surprised to see that They were sitting on the chariot as before. When he saw Them on the chariot, he began to wonder whether he saw Them in the water. He therefore went back to the river. This time he saw not only Balarāma and Kṛṣṇa there, but many of the demigods and all the Siddhas, Cāraṇas, and Gandharvas. They were all standing before the Lord, who was lying down. He also saw the Śeṣa Nāga with thousands of hoods. Lord Śeṣa Nāga was covered with bluish garments, and His necks were all white. The white necks of Śeṣa Nāga appeared exactly like snowcapped mountains. On the curved lap of Seṣa Nāga, Akrūra saw Kṛṣṇa sitting very soberly, with four hands. His eyes were like the reddish petals of the lotus flower. In other words, after returning, Akrūra saw Balarāma turned into Śeṣa Nāga and Kṛṣṇa turned into Mahā-Viṣṇu" (*Kṛṣṇa*, pp. 317–318).

The Yamunā River has since moved from this spot, and is now about a kilometer away. When Lord Caitanya visited Vṛndāvana, He spent the afternoons and evenings at Akrūra-ghāṭa.

Yajña-sthāna

"The morning passed, and the cowherd boys were very hungry because they had not eaten breakfast. They immediately approached Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma and said, 'Dear Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma, You are both all-powerful; You can kill many, many demons, but today we are much afflicted with hunger, and this is disturbing us. Please arrange for something that will mitigate our hunger.'

"Requested in this way by Their friends, Lord Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma immediately showed compassion on certain wives of *brāhmaṇas* who were performing sacrifices. These wives were great devotees of the Lord, and

Yajña-sthāna

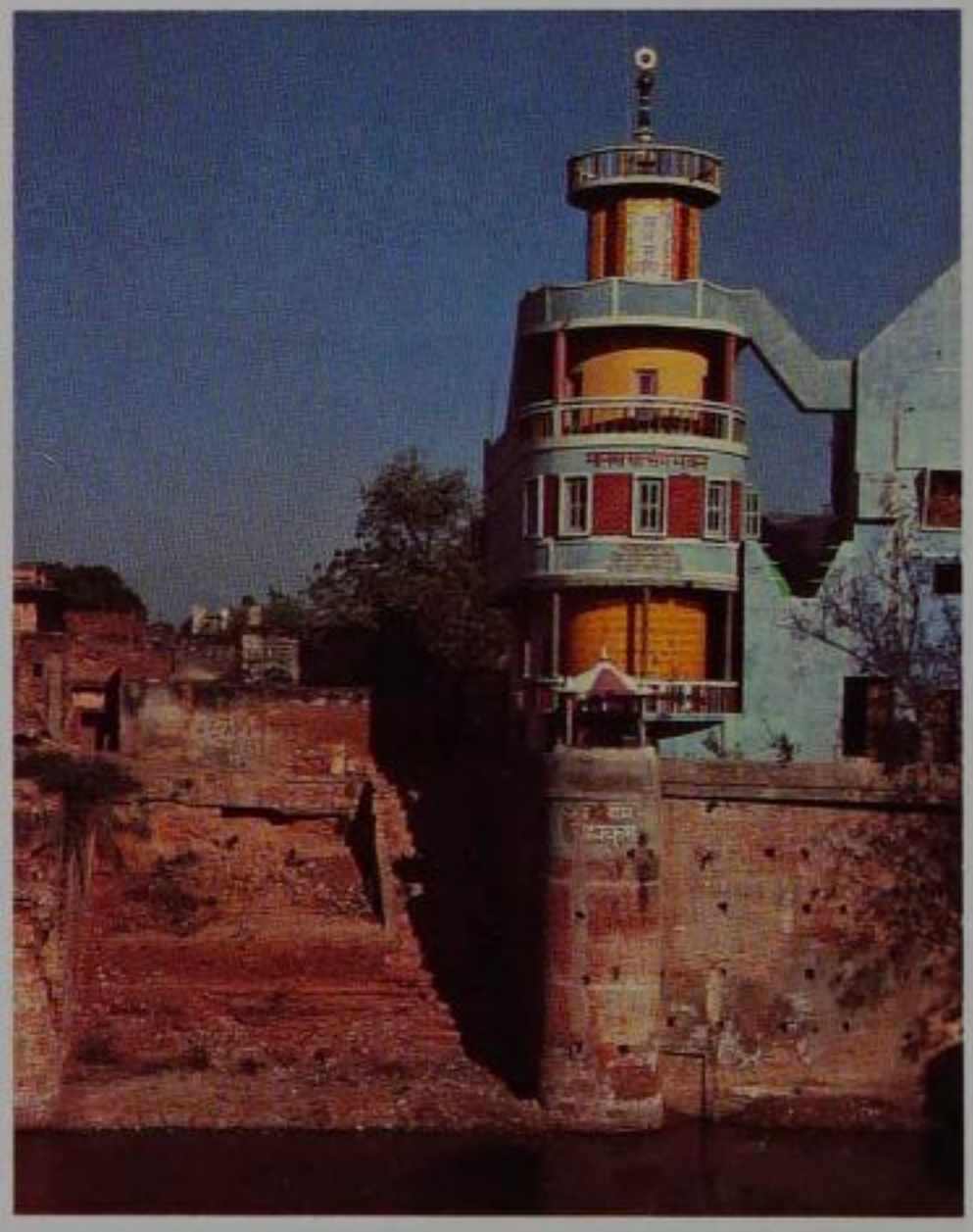
Kṛṣṇa took this opportunity to bless them. He said, 'My dear friends, please go to the house of the *brāhmaṇas* nearby. They are now engaged in performing Vedic sacrifices known as *āṅgirasa*, for they desire elevation to the heavenly planets. All of you please go to them' " (*Kṛṣṇa*, p. 199).

The cowherd boys then proceeded to the place where the *brāhmaṇas* were performing sacrifices, but these *brāhmaṇas* were fruitive workers and they refused to give in charity to the cowherd boys.

"When the boys saw that the *brāhmaṇas* would not speak to them, they became very disappointed. They returned to Lord Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma and explained everything that had happened. After hearing their statements, the Supreme Personality began to smile. He told them that they should not be sorry for being refused by the *brāhmaṇas* because that is the way of begging. He convinced them that while one is engaged in collecting or begging, one should not think that he will be successful everywhere. He may be unsuccessful in some places, but that should not be cause for disappointment. Lord Kṛṣṇa then asked all the boys to go again, but this time to the wives of those *brāhmaṇas* engaged in sacrifices. He also informed them that these wives were great devotees. 'They are always absorbed in thinking of Us. Go there and ask for some food in My name and the name of Balarāma, and I am sure that they will deliver you as much food as you desire.'

"Carrying out Kṛṣṇa's order the boys went to the wives of the *brāhmaṇas*. . . . Immediately upon hearing [the request of the cowherd boys] the wives of the *brāhmaṇas* became anxious for Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma. Their reactions were spontaneous. They did not have to be convinced of the importance of Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma; immediately upon hearing Their names, they became very anxious to see Them. Being advanced by thinking of Kṛṣṇa constantly, they were performing the greatest form of mystic meditation. All the wives then became very busily engaged in filling up different pots with nice foodstuff. Due to the performance of the sacrifice, the various food was all very palatable. After collecting a feast, they prepared to go to Kṛṣṇa, their most lovable object, exactly in the way rivers flow to the sea" (*Kṛṣṇa,* p. 202).

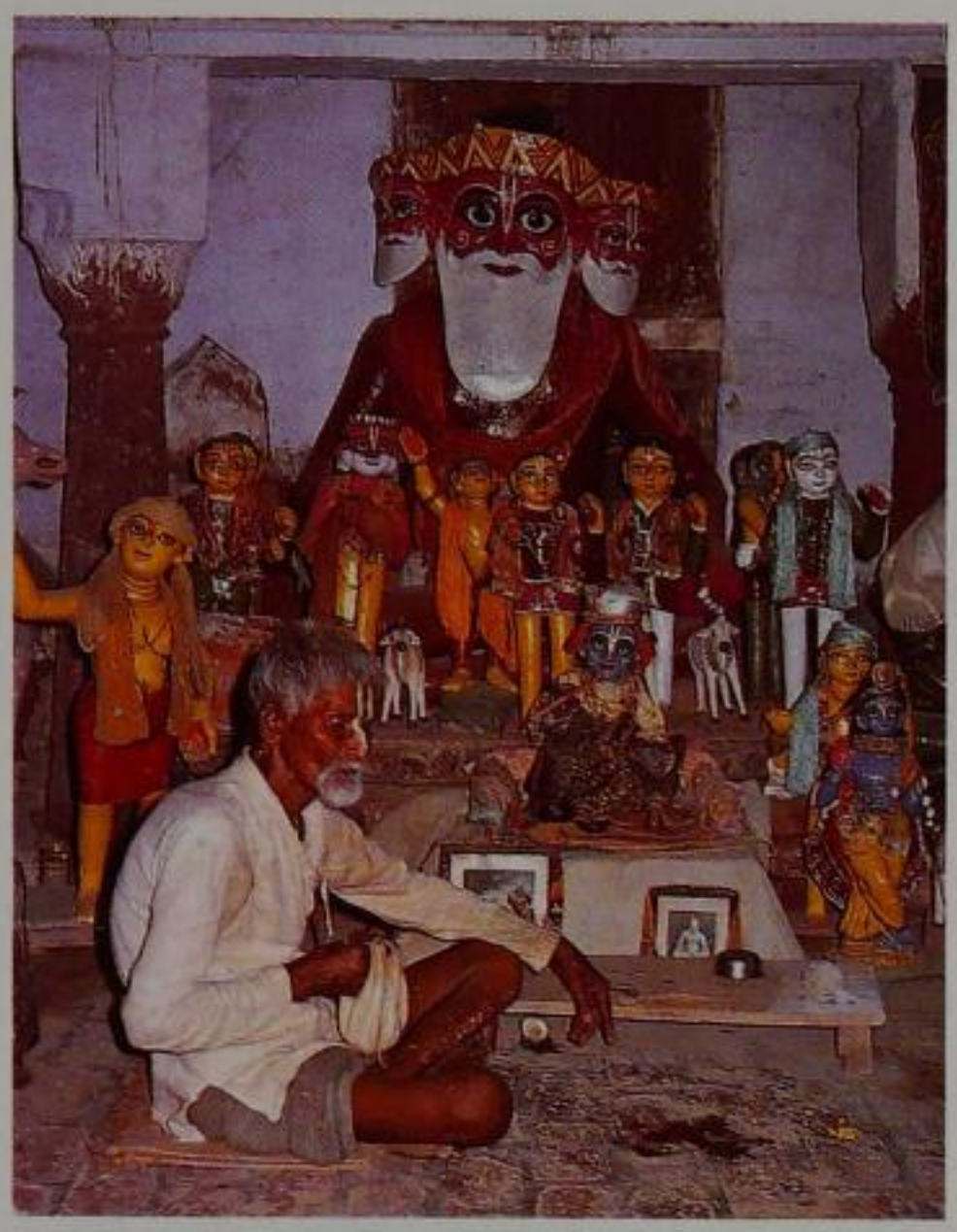
"The beautiful, wealthy, and learned wives of the *yājñika-brāhmaṇas* voluntarily, happily, and devotedly fed Kṛṣṇa, Balarāma, and all Their affectionate friends many varieties of the four kinds of foodstuff, each dish rebuking the taste of nectar. We bow down to offer our respects to the place where Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoyed this pastime" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 86).



Brahma-kuṇḍa

Brahma-kuṇḍa

"After killing Aghāsura, Kṛṣṇa, along with His associates the cowherd boys, went for a picnic within the forest. The calves, being allured by green



Deities at Brahma-kuṇḍa

grasses, gradually went far away, and therefore Kṛṣṇa's associates became a little agitated and wanted to bring back the calves. Kṛṣṇa, however, encouraged the boys by saying, 'You take your tiffin without being agitated. I shall go find the calves.' And thus the Lord departed. Then, just to examine the potency of Kṛṣṇa, Lord Brahmā took away all the calves and cowherd boys and kept them in a secluded place.

"When Kṛṣṇa was unable to find the calves and boys, He could understand that this was a trick performed by Brahmā. Then the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the cause of all causes, in order to please Lord Brahmā, as well as His own associates and their mothers, expanded Himself to become the calves and boys, exactly as they were before. In this way, He discovered another pastime. A special feature of this pastime was that the mothers of the cowherd boys thus became more attached to their respective sons, and the cows became more attached to their calves. After nearly a year, Baladeva observed that all the cowherd boys and calves were expansions of Kṛṣṇa. Thus He inquired from Kṛṣṇa and was informed of what had happened.

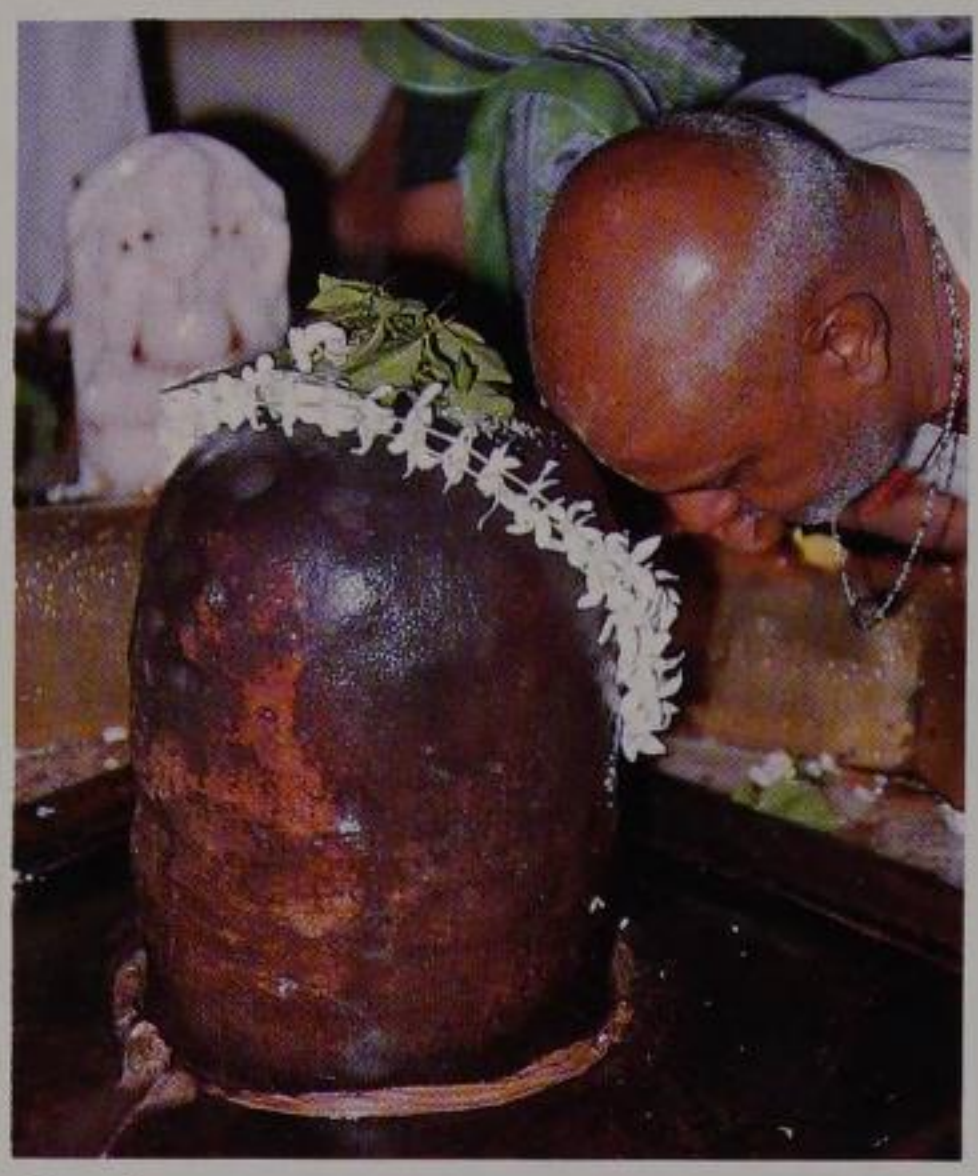
"When one full year had passed, Brahmā returned and saw that Kṛṣṇa was still engaged as usual with His friends and the calves and cows. Then Kṛṣṇa exhibited all the calves and cowherd boys as four-armed forms of Nārāyaṇa. Brahmā could then understand Kṛṣṇa's potency, and he was astonished by the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa, his worshipable Lord. Kṛṣṇa, however, bestowed His causeless mercy upon Brahmā and released him from illusion. Thus Brahmā began to offer prayers to glorify the Supreme Personality of Godhead" (*Bhāg.* 10.13, chapter summary).

The place where Lord Brahmā offered prayers to Lord Kṛṣṇa is known as Brahma-kuṇḍa. On its banks Rūpa Gosvāmī discovered the Vṛndā-devī deity. Bilvamaṅgala Ṭhākura, the author of *Kṛṣṇa-karṇāmṛta,* performed austerities and penances here.

"Afraid that he had committed a grave offense by stealing the cowherd boys and calves, Brahmā fell down on the ground, and, with tears in his eyes, spoke many wonderful and unprecedented prayers glorifying gently smiling Lord Kṛṣṇa, who is both the giver of liberation and the wonderful cowherd son of the King of Vraja. Let us glorify this sacred place, Śeṣa-bhiru-caturmukha, where frightened Brahmā offered prayers to the Lord" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 97).

Gopīśvara Mandira

The name Gopīśvara signifies Lord Śiva as the *īśvara,* or "controller," of the *gopīs.* Because he is a male, Lord Śiva was not permitted to enter into the *rāsa* dance, so he bathed in the Māna-sarovara and took on a female form. On returning to the *rāsa* dance he was favored by Lord Kṛṣṇa, who told him that he should guard the entrance and that no one would be allowed in without his blessings. Devotees pray to Lord Śiva so they may be



Gopīśvara

blessed with devotion to the Supreme Lord, Kṛṣṇa, and gain entrance into His association.

Another name for Lord Śiva is Śambhu. He has been described by Lord Brahmā:

"Just as milk is transformed into curd by the action of acids, but yet the effect curd is neither the same as, nor different from, its cause, viz., milk, so I adore the primeval Lord Govinda of whom the state of Śambhu is a transformation for the performance of the work of destruction."

PURPORT

"Śambhu is not a second Godhead other than Kṛṣṇa. Those who entertain such discriminating sentiment commit a great offense against the Supreme Lord. The supremacy of Śambhu is subservient to that of Govinda; hence they are not really different from each other. The nondistinction is established by the fact that just as milk treated with acid turns into curd, so Godhead becomes a subservient when He Himself attains a distinct personality by the addition of a particular element of adulteration. This personality has no independent initiative. The said adulterating principle is constituted of a combination of the stupefying quality of the deluding energy, the quality of nonplenitude of the marginal potency and a slight degree of the ecstatic-cum-cognitive principle of the plenary spiritual potency. This specifically adulterated reflection of the principle of the subjective portion of the Divinity is Sadāśiva, in the form of the effulgent masculine-symbol-god Śambhu from whom Rudradeva is manifested. In the work of mundane creation as the material cause, in the work of preservation by the destruction of sundry *asuras* and in the work of destruction to conduct the whole operation, Govinda manifests Himself as *guṇa-avatāra* in the form of Śambhu, who is the separated portion of Govinda imbued with the principle of His subjective plenary portion. The

A deity of Lord Śiva as a gopī

personality of the destructive principle in the form of time has been identified with that of Śambhu by scriptural evidences that have been adduced in the commentary. The purport of the *Bhāgavata ślokas,* viz., *vaiṣṇavānāṁ yathā śambhuḥ,* etc., is that Śambhu, in pursuance of the will of Govinda, works in union with his consort Durgā-devī by his own time energy. He teaches pious duties (*dharma*) as stepping-stones to the attainment of spiritual service in the various *tantra-śāstras,* etc., suitable for *jīvas* in different grades of the conditional existence. In obedience to the will of Govinda, Śambhu maintains and fosters the religion of pure devotion by preaching the cult of illusionism (Māyāvādā) and the speculative *āgama-śāstras.* The fifty attributes of individual souls are manifest in a far vaster measure in Śambhu, and five additional attributes not attainable by *jīvas* are also partly found in him. So Śambhu cannot be called a *jīva.* He is lord of *jīva* but yet partakes of the nature of a separated portion of Govinda" (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.45).

"Desiring to quickly attain the treasure of the embraces of Lord Kṛṣṇa, the splendid and affectionate *gopīs* devotedly and happily worshiped Lord Śiva on the bank of the Yamunā. I daily worship Gopīśvara-tīrtha, where the *gopīs* performed their worship" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 87).

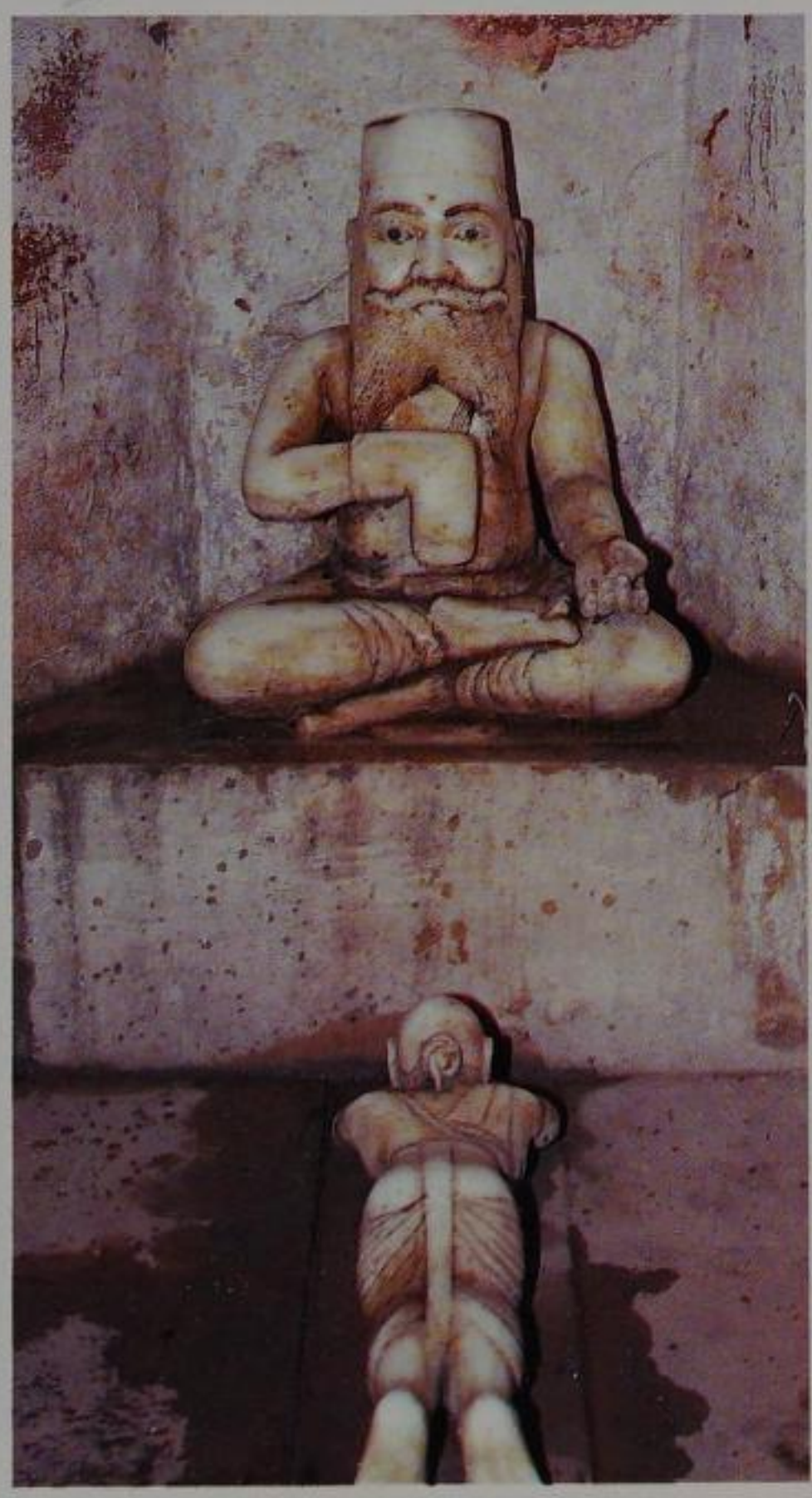
Vaṁśīvaṭa

"In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* it is stated that the *rāsa* dance took place on the full moon night of the *śarat* season. . . . From Vedic literature it appears that when a theatrical actor dances among many dancing girls, the group-dance is called a *rāsa* dance. When Kṛṣṇa saw the full moon night of the *śarat* season, He decorated Himself with various seasonal flowers, especially the *mallikā* flowers, which

Vaṁśīvaṭa

are very fragrant. He remembered the *gopī's* prayers to goddess Kātyāyaṇī, wherein they prayed for Kṛṣṇa to be their husband. He thought that the full moon night of the *śarat* season was just suitable for a nice dance. So their desire to have Kṛṣṇa as their husband would then be fulfilled. . . .

"The appearance of the moon



Śukadeva Gosvāmī offering obeisances to his father, Śrīla Vyāsadeva

Expanding Himself to dance with each gopī, Kṛṣṇa enjoys the rāsa dance in the forest of Vṛndāvana

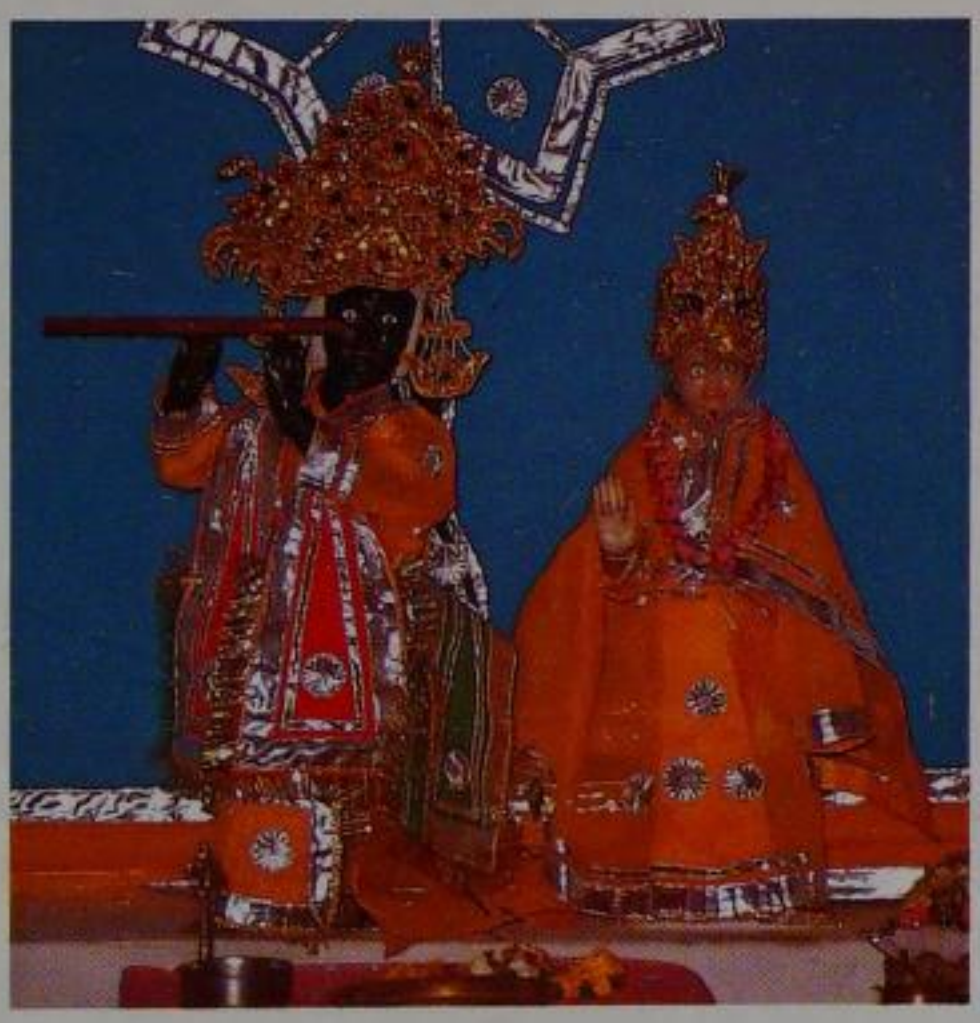
increased Kṛṣṇa's desire to dance with the *gopīs*. The forests were filled with fragrant flowers. The atmosphere was cooling and festive. When Lord Kṛṣṇa began to blow His flute, the *gopīs* all over Vṛndāvana became enchanted. Their attraction to the vibration of the flute increased a thousand times due to the rising full moon, the red horizon, the calm and cool atmosphere, and the blossoming flowers. All these *gopīs* were by nature very much attracted to Kṛṣṇa's beauty, and when they heard the vibration of His flute, they became apparently lustful to satisfy the senses of Kṛṣṇa.

"Immediately upon hearing the vibration of the flute, they all left their respective engagements and proceeded to the spot where Kṛṣṇa was standing. While they ran very swiftly, all their earrings swung back and forth. They all rushed to the place known as Vaṁśīvaṭa" (*Kṛṣṇa*, pp. 237–240).

After pleasing talks with Kṛṣṇa, all of the *gopīs* danced with Him throughout the forests of Vṛndāvana.

Māna-sarovara

After visiting the Pañcakrośī Vṛndāvana area, pilgrims generally cross the Yamunā River and come to this beautiful place, where Lord Śiva bathed to take on the form of a *gopī*.



The Deities in Lohavana

Lohavana

Bhakti-ratnākara (Fifth Wave) states, "At Lohavana, Lord Kṛṣṇa used to tend cows. The demon named Lohajaṅgha was killed at this place." The Deities in the temple on the bank of Kṛṣṇa-kuṇḍa are named Rādhā-Gopīnātha.

Daujī

Daujī is a name for Lord Balarāma meaning "elder brother." He is the presiding Deity of the southern petal

Daujī

in the lotus of Vraja. During the Muslim invasions Daujī was placed in the Khīrsāgara, a *kuṇḍa* behind the temple. This *kuṇḍa* was constructed thousands of years ago when the Vrajavāsīs filled it with milk from 100,000 cows as an offering to please

Balarāma. Daujī is the largest of the Deities installed by Vajranābha. Balarāma's wife Revatī is also installed there.

"(The spiritual place of transcendental pastimes of Kṛṣṇa is portrayed in this verse.) The superexcellent station of Kṛṣṇa, which is known as Gokula, has thousands of petals and a corolla like that of a lotus sprouted from a part of His infinitary aspect, the whorl of the leaves being the actual abode of Kṛṣṇa."

PURPORT

"Gokula, like Goloka, is not a created mundane plane—unbounded character forms the display of His unlimited potency and His propagating manifestation. Baladeva is the mainstay of that energy. The transcendental entity of Baladeva has two aspects viz., infinite spiritual manifestation and infinite accommodating space for insentient gross things. The uniquadrantal delineation of material universe will be dealt with in the proper place. The triquadrantal extensions of the transcendental infinitary field of the almighty, unlamenting, nonperishing and nonapprehending unlimited situations of halo which are fully spiritual majestic foliation. This very majestical extension portrays the manifested lofty rich feature of the vaster unlimited region or greater atmosphere which has its resplendent location wholly beyond the realm of mundane nature, on the further shore of Virajā surrounded by the halo of Brahman or indistinguishable entity. This majestical power of unlimited spirit emanates on the upper portion of the luminous sphere into the most charming Gokula or eternally existing Goloka, exceedingly beautified by the assorted display of effulgence. Some designate this region as the abode of the Supreme Nārāyaṇa, or the original fountainhead. Hence Gokula, which is identical with Goloka, is the supreme plane. The same sphere shines as Goloka and Gokula respectively by its upper or transcendental and lower or mundane situation.

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī has told us as follows in his *Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta* which embodies the final essence of all the books of instructions, "He displays His pastimes here in this land as He is used to do in Goloka. The difference between the two planes lies only in their locations as high and low; that is, in other words, Kṛṣṇa plays exactly the same part in Goloka as He exhibits on the mundane plane of Gokula. There is practically no difference between Gokula and Goloka save that this, what exists in the shape of Goloka in the upper region is the same as Gokula on the mundane plane when Kṛṣṇa showed His various activity there. Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī has also inculcated the same in the *Bhagavata-sandarbha* of his "Six Treatises." To ascertain the plane of Goloka Vṛndāvana as the eternal abode of Kṛṣṇa and Goloka and Vṛndāvana are identically one, and though both are identical, yet Kṛṣṇa's inconceivable energy has made Goloka the acme of this spiritual kingdom and Gokula of Mathurā province forming a part of the mundane plane which is also a manifestation of triquadrantal *vibhūti* (conducting majesty). Poor human understanding cannot possibly make out how the extensive triquadrantal, which is beyond human comprehension, can be accommodated in the limited nether material universe of a uniquadrantal disclosure. Gokula is a spiritual plane, hence His condescended position in the region of material space, time, etc., is in no way restricted but unlimitedly manifested with His full boundless propriety. But conditioned souls are apt to assert a material conception in regard to Gokula by their miserable senses so as to bring Him below the level of their intellect. Though the eye

of an observer is impeded by a cloud when gazing at the sun, still the clouded vision apparently observes the sun as covered by the cloud. In just the same way the conditioned souls with their obscured intelligence, senses and decisions, accept Gokula as a piece of measurable land. We can see Gokula from Goloka which is eternal. This is also a mystery. The attainment of final beatitude is the success in attaining one's eternal self. The success in identifying the true self is finally achieved when the screen of gross and subtle coils of conditioned souls is removed by the sweet will of Kṛṣṇa. However, the idea of Goloka is seen to differ from Gokula till the success in unalloyed devotion is achieved. The transcendental plane of infinite spiritual manifestation having thousands of petals and corolla like those of the lotus, is Gokula, the eternal abode of Kṛṣṇa" (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.2).

"Neither Brahmā, Nārada, Śiva, or the great devotees filled with pure love of Kṛṣṇa are able to properly or completely understand the sweetness of the land of Vraja. Only Lord Balarāma and His mother Rohiṇī, who are both filled with transcendental love, are able to understand the land of Vraja. How is it possible for me to describe the land of Vraja?" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 104).

Mahāvana

Mahāvana is described as follows in the *Bhakti-ratnākara*: "Behold the house of Nanda and Yaśodā in Mahāvana. See the birthplace of Lord Kṛṣṇa. Mahāvana and the birthplace of Lord Kṛṣṇa, Gokula, are one and the same."

After Kṛṣṇa's appearance in Mathurā, Vasudeva, fearing Kaṁsa, carried Him to the home of Nanda and Yaśodā in Mahāvana.

"When Vasudeva was carrying Kṛṣṇa, the darkness of the night disappeared. All the prison doors automatically opened by the influence of Yogamāyā. At the same time there was a thunder in the sky and severe rainfall. While Vasudeva was carrying his son Kṛṣṇa in the falling rain, Lord Śeṣa in the shape of a serpent spread His hoods over the head of Vasudeva so that he would not be hampered by the rainfall. Vasudeva came onto the bank of the Yamunā and saw that the water of the Yamunā was roaring with waves and that the whole span was full of foam. Still, in that furious feature, the river gave passage to Vasudeva to cross, just

Deities in Gokula

as the great Indian Ocean gave a path to Lord Rāma when He was bridging over the gulf" (*Kṛṣṇa*, p. 46).

Just to test the intense love of Vasudeva, Lord Kṛṣṇa fell into the Yamunā while His father was carrying Him across the river. Vasudeva became mad as he searched for his child until he recovered Him in the midst of the rising river.

"On the other side, he went to the place of Nanda Mahārāja situated in Gokula, where he saw that all the cowherd men were fast asleep. He took the opportunity of silently entering into the house of Yaśodā, and without difficulty he replaced his son, taking away the baby girl newly born in the house of Yaśodā. Then, after entering the house very silently and exchanging the boy with the girl, he

again returned to the prison of Kaṁsa and silently put the girl on the lap of Devakī. He again clamped the shackles on himself so that Kaṁsa could not recognize that so many things had happened" (*Kṛṣṇa*, p. 46).

The following question may be raised: Since it is stated in *śāstra* that Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, never leaves Vṛndāvana (*vṛndāvanaṁ parityaja sa kvacit naiva gacchati*), how did He appear in Mathurā?

This confidential pastime has been explained by the previous *ācāryas* as follows: "Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī discusses that Kṛṣṇa appeared simultaneously as the son of Devakī and the son of Yaśodā, along with the spiritual energy Yogamāyā. As the son of Devakī, He first appeared as Viṣṇu, and because Vasudeva was not in the position of pure affection for Kṛṣṇa, Vāsudeva worshiped his son as Lord Viṣṇu. Yaśodā, however, pleased her son Kṛṣṇa without understanding His Godhead. This is the difference between Kṛṣṇa as the son of Yaśodā and as the son of Devakī. This is explained by Viśvanātha Cakravartī on the authority of *Hari-vaṁśa*" (*Bhāg.* 10.3.47, purport).

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī also discusses this pastime:

"In ancient times some devotees have said that the Lord appeared in His Vāsudeva feature in the home of Mahārāja Vasudeva, and at the same time He appeared in His original form as Kṛṣṇa in the village of Gokula. In this way these devotees have said that Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Yogamāyā were the twin children of Yaśodā in Gokula. When Mahārāja Vasudeva arrived in Gokula he entered Yaśodādevī's maternity room, saw Yaśodā's daughter, took her, and returned with her to Mathurā. The Vāsudeva expansion Mahārāja Vasudeva carried with him entered the body of Śrī Kṛṣṇa who had just taken birth as the son of Yaśodā. In this way the two forms of Vāsudeva and Kṛṣṇa became one.

"Because this pastime is very confidential it was not related in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*. Nevertheless Śukadeva Gosvāmī and other great devotees have indirectly described it in some of their writings" (*Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta* 1.5.454–456).

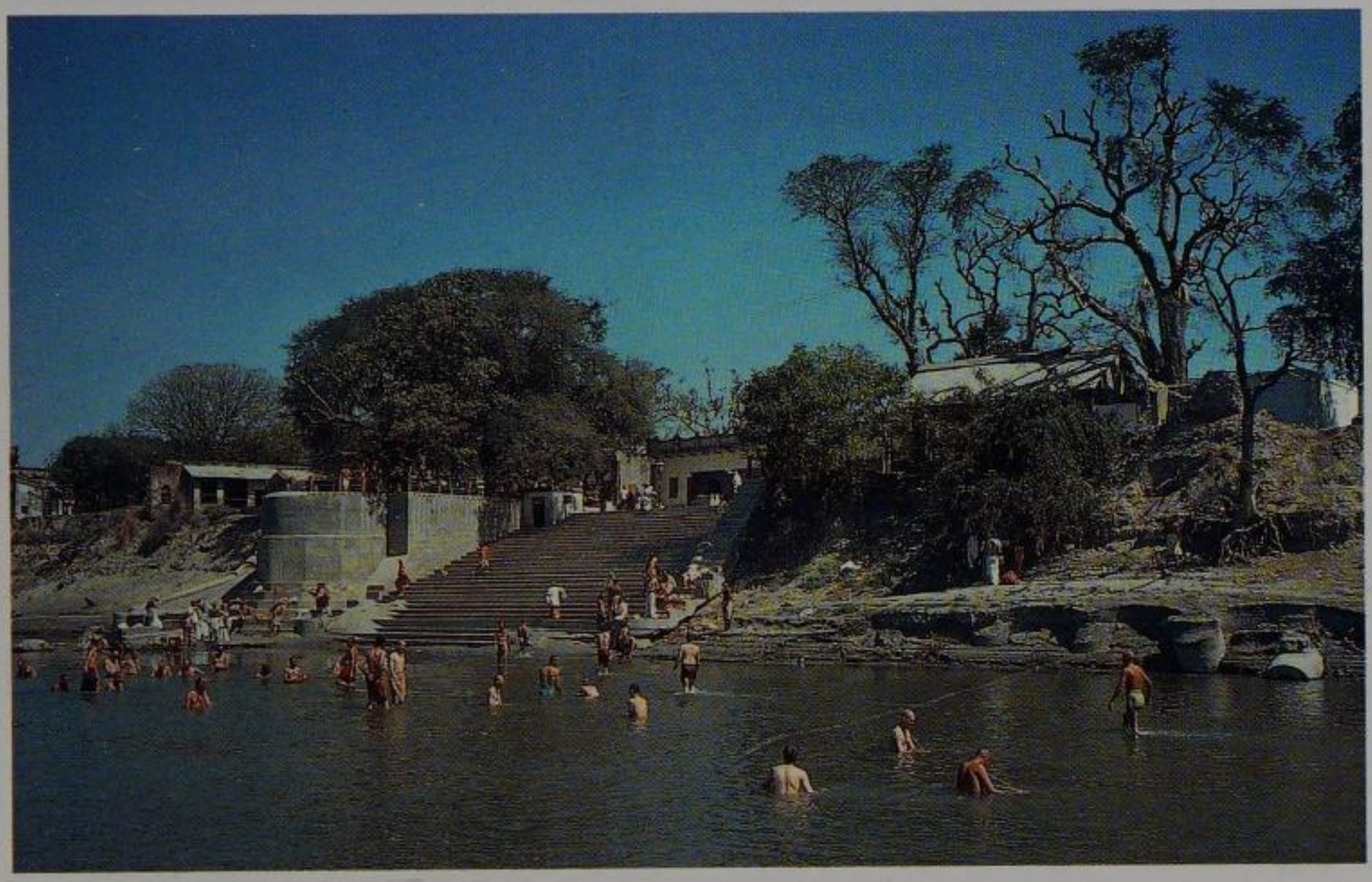
"Vasudeva placed his own son in Nanda's home, took Yaśodā's daughter, and gave her to King Kaṁsa. By Lord Kṛṣṇa's inconceivable potency the two Kṛṣṇas born separately from Devakī and Yaśodā became one tiny child" (*Aiśvarya-kadambinī*, Fifth Shower, Text 6).

Temple in Mahāvana, with original pillars from the house of Nanda Mahārāja

During His childhood years Kṛṣṇa lived at the house of Nanda Mahārāja and Yaśodā with His elder brother, Balarāma. There were many disturbances at that time caused by demons like Pūtanā, Tṛṇāvarta, and Śakaṭāsura. Kṛṣṇa's pastime of pulling down the twin *arjuna* trees also took place here. Several small temples in the area surrounding Mahāvana glorify these transcendental pastimes. The pillars in the main temple are said to be from the original house of Nanda Mahārāja. This forest of

Mahāvana is also the appearance site of Lord Balarāma, and here Garga Muni performed the name-giving ceremony for Krsna and Balarāma.

"During the festival of Lord Kṛṣṇa's birth, the King of Vraja respectfully gave to the *brāhmaṇas* a mountain of jeweled ornaments, an even greater mountain of grains, and two hundred thousand young cows, all beautifully decorated with gold and necklaces of large pearls. I offer my respectful obeisances to Mahāvana, the place where the king gave this charity" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 89).



Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa

Brahmāṇḍa-ghāṭa

Once when Kṛṣṇa and Balarāma were playing with Their friends, all the boys joined Balarāma and told mother Yaśodā that Kṛṣṇa had eaten clay. On hearing this, mother Yaśodā caught hold of Kṛṣṇa's hand and scolded Him. Kṛṣṇa denied that He had eaten the clay. "My dear mother," He said, "all these boys, including My elder brother Balarāma, are speaking lies against Me. I have never eaten clay. My elder brother, Balarāma, while playing with Me today, became angry, and therefore He has joined with the other boys to complain against Me so you will be angry and chastise Me. If you think they are telling the truth, then you can look within My mouth to see whether I have taken clay or not."

When Kṛṣṇa opened His mouth just like an ordinary boy, mother Yaśodā saw within it the complete creation. Upon seeing this, she became struck with awe and began to wonder whether she was dreaming or actually seeing something extraordinary. In this state of mind she then offered prayers to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

While mother Yaśodā was thinking in this way, Lord Kṛṣṇa again expanded His internal energy just to bewilder her with maternal affection. She took Him in her lap and became overwhelmed with love for Him.

Raval

According to the Gauḍīya-*parampará* this is the sacred place where Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī appeared.

King Vṛṣabhānu was once in the Yamunā River when he saw an effulgence coming from the middle of the river. As he approached he saw a small girl on a golden lotus flower. Lord Brahmā then appeared and explained that in their previous lives Vṛṣabhānu and his wife, Kīrtidā, had performed severe austerities to have Lakṣmī-devī appear as their daughter. Lord Brahmā then entrusted Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī to their care.

Although Vṛṣabhānu and Kīrtidā felt ecstasy, they were also unhappy, for the girl was blind. Nārada Muni came to inform them that they should hold a feast in honor of the new child and invite all the cowherd men and women.

All the cowherd men and women—including Nanda Mahārāja, mother Yaśodā, Balarāma, and Kṛṣṇa—assembled in Mukhyeravalī to see the newborn child. The baby was lying on Her back as Kṛṣṇa crawled near to see Her. She could smell the saffron and sandal paste along with the transcendental fragrance of His body as He brought His face before Hers. Then she opened Her eyes for the first time.

"In the city of Mukhyeravalī the precious jewel known as Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī took birth in the mine of Kīrtidā's womb, which is glorified by jubilant demigods, sages, and human beings. I pray that when I enter King Vṛṣabhānu's capital city of Mukhyeravalī-pura, populated with many *gopas, gopīs,* and *surabhi* cows, I may become drowned in a great flood of transcendental bliss and love" (*Vraja-vilāsa-stava* 90).

Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are one and the same, but They have assumed two bodies. Thus They enjoy each other, tasting the mellows of love.

"Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the potent factor, and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the internal potency. According to *Vedānta* philosophy, there is no difference between the potent and potency; they are identical. We cannot differentiate between one and the other, any more than we can separate fire from heat. Everything in the Absolute is inconceivable in relative existence. Therefore in relative cognizance it is very difficult to assimilate this truth of the oneness between the potent and the potency. The philosophy of inconceivable oneness and difference propounded by Lord Caitanya is the only source of understanding for such intracacies of transcendence.

"In fact, Rādhārāṇī is the internal potency of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and She eternally intensifies the pleasure of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Impersonalists cannot understand this without the help of a *mahā-bhāgavata* devotee. The very name Rādhā suggests that She is eternally the topmost mistress for the comforts of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Devotees in Vṛndāvana therefore seek the mercy of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī in order to be recognized as loving servitors of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. . . .

Deities at Raval

"The Absolute Personality of Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is the omnipotent form of transcendental existence, knowledge and bliss in full" (Cc. *Ādi* 4.56, purport).

"In his thesis *Bhagavata-sandarbha* (verse 102), Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains the potencies of the Lord as

follows. The transcendental potency of the Supreme Personality of Godhead by which He maintains His existence is called *sandhinī.* The transcendental potency by which He knows Himself and causes others to know Him is called *saṁvit.* The transcendental potency by which He possesses transcendental bliss and causes His devotees to have bliss is called *hlādinī.*

"The total exhibition of these potencies is called *viśuddha-sattva,* and this platform of spiritual variegatedness is displayed even in the material world when the Lord appears here. . . .

"Each of the three divisions of the internal potency—the *sandhinī, saṁvit* and *hlādinī* energies—influences one of the external potencies by which the conditioned souls are conducted. Such influence manifests the three qualitative modes of material nature (goodness, passion and ignorance), proving definitely that the living entities, the marginal potency, are eternally servitors of the Lord and are therefore controlled by either the internal or the external potency" (Cc. *Ādi* 4.62, purport).

"The product of the *hlādinī-śakti* is love of Godhead, which has two divisions—namely pure love of Godhead and adulterated love of Godhead. Only when the *hlādinī-śakti* emanates from Śrī Kṛṣṇa and is bestowed upon the living being to attract Him does the living being become a pure lover of God. But when the same *hlādinī-śakti* is adulterated by the external material energy and emanates from the living being, it does not attract Kṛṣṇa; on the contrary, the living being becomes attracted by the glamor of the material energy. At that time instead of becoming mad with love of Godhead, the living being becomes mad after material sense enjoyment, and because of his association with the qualitative modes of material nature he is captivated by its interactions of distressful, unhappy feelings" (Cc. *Ādi* 4.68, purport).

"The unadulterated action of the *hlādinī-śakti* is displayed in the dealings of the damsels of Vraja and Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, who is the topmost participant in that transcendental group. The essence of the *hlādinī-śakti* is love of Godhead, the essence of love of Godhead is *bhāva,* or transcendental sentiment, and the highest pitch of that *bhāva* is called *mahā-bhāva.* Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the personified embodiment of these three aspects of transcendental consciousness. She is therefore the highest principle in love of Godhead and is the supreme lovable object of Śrī Kṛṣṇa" (Cc. *Ādi* 4.69, purport).

"Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is as fully spiritual as Kṛṣṇa. No one should consider Her to be material. She is definitely not like the conditioned souls, who have material bodies, gross and subtle, covered by material senses. She is all-spiritual, and both Her body and mind are of the same spiritual embodiment. Because Her body is spiritual, Her senses are also spiritual. Thus Her body, mind and senses fully shine in love of Kṛṣṇa. She is the personified *hlādinī-śakti* (the pleasure-giving energy of the Lord's internal potency), and therefore She is the only source of enjoyment for Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

"Śrī Kṛṣṇa cannot enjoy anything that is internally different from Him. Therefore Rādhā and Śrī Kṛṣṇa are identical. The *sandhinī* portion of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's internal potency has manifested the all-attractive form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and the same internal potency, in the *hlādinī* feature, has presented Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, who is the attraction for the all-attractive. No one can match Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī in the transcendental pastimes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa" (Cc. *Ādi* 4.71, purport).

"I worship Govinda, the primeval Lord, who resides in His own realm, Goloka, with Rādhā, who resembles His own spiritual figure and who embodies the ecstatic potency (*hlādinī*). Their companions are Her confidantes, who embody extensions of Her bodily form and who are imbued and permeated with ever-blissful spiritual *rasa*" (*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.37).

"Now please listen to how Lord Kṛṣṇa's consorts help Him taste *rasa* and how they help in His pastimes. The beloved consorts of Lord Kṛṣṇa are of three kinds: the goddesses of fortune, the queens, and the milkmaids of Vraja, who are the foremost of all. These consorts all proceed from Rādhikā. Just as the fountainhead, Lord Kṛṣṇa, is the cause of all incarnations, so Śrī Rādhā is the cause of all these consorts. The goddesses of fortune are partial manifestations of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, and the queens are reflections of Her image. The goddesses of fortune are Her plenary portions, and they display the forms of *vaibhava-vilāsa.* The queens are of the nature of Her *vaibhava-prakāśa.* The Vraja-devīs have diverse bodily features. They are Her expansions and are instruments for expanding *rasa.* Without many consorts, there is not such exultation in *rasa.* Therefore there are many manifestations of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī to assist in the Lord's pastimes. Among them are various groups of consorts in Vraja who have varieties of sentiments and mellows. They help Lord Kṛṣṇa taste all the sweetness of the *rāsa* dance and other pastimes" (Cc. *Ādi* 4.73-81).

"As already explained, Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā are one in two. They are identical. Kṛṣṇa expands Himself in multi-incarnations and plenary portions like the *puruṣas.* Similarly, Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī expands Herself in multiforms as the goddesses of fortune, the queens and the damsels of Vraja. Such expansions from Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī are all Her plenary portions. All these womanly forms of Kṛṣṇa are expansions corresponding to His plenary expansions of Viṣṇu forms. These expansions have been compared to reflected forms of the original form. There is no difference between the original and reflected forms. The female reflections of Kṛṣṇa's pleasure potency are as good as Kṛṣṇa Himself.

"The plenary expansions of Kṛṣṇa's personality are called *vaibhava-vilāsa* and *vaibhava-prakāśa,* and Rādhā's expansions are similarly described. The goddesses of fortune are *vaibhava-vilāsa,* and the queens are *vaibhava-prakāśa* of Rādhārāṇī. The personal associates of Rādhārāṇī, the damsels of Vraja, are direct expansions of Her body. As expansions of Her personal form and transcendental disposition, they are agents of different reciprocations of love in the pastimes of Lord Kṛṣṇa, under the supreme direction of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. In the transcendental realm enjoyment is fully relished in variety. The exuberance of transcendental mellow is increased by the association of a large number of personalities similar to Rādhārāṇī, who are also known as *gopīs* or *sakhīs.* The variety of innumerable mistresses is a source of relish for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and therefore these expansions from Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī are necessary for enhancing the pleasure potency of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Their transcendental exchanges of love are the superexcellent affairs of the pastimes in Vṛndāvana. By these expansions of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī's personal body, She helps Lord Kṛṣṇa taste the *rāsa* dance and similar activities, . . . being the central petal of the *rasa-līlā* flower. . . ." (Cc. *Ādi* 4.81, purport).

"Of the four kinds of reciprocation of loving service—*dāsya, sakhya,*

Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa enjoy pastimes in the river Yamunā with Their confidential associates

vātsalya and *mādhurya—mādhurya* is considered the fullest. But the conjugal relationship is further divided into two varieties, namely *svakīya* and *parakīya. Svakīya* is the relationship with Kṛṣṇa as formally married husband, and *parakīya* is the relationship with Kṛṣṇa as a paramour. Expert analysts have decided that the transcendental ecstasy of the *parakīya* mellow is better because it is more enthusiastic. This phase of conjugal love is found in those who have surrendered to the Lord in intense love, knowing well that such illicit love with a paramour is not morally approved in society. The risks involved in such love of Godhead make this emotion superior to the relationship in which such risk is not involved. The validity of such risk, however, is possible only in the transcendental realm. *Svakīya* and *parakīya* conjugal love of Godhead have no existence in the material world, and *parakīya* is not exhibited anywhere in Vaikuṇṭha, but only in the portion of Goloka Vṛndāvana known as Vraja.

"Some devotees think that Kṛṣṇa is eternally the enjoyer in Goloka Vṛndāvana but only sometimes comes to the platform of Vraja to enjoy *parakīya-rasa.* The six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana, however, have explained that Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vraja are eternal, like His other activities in Goloka Vṛndāvana. Vraja is a confidential part of Goloka Vṛndāvana. Kṛṣṇa exhibited His Vraja pastimes on the surface of this world, and similar pastimes are eternally exhibited in Vraja in Goloka Vṛndāvana, where *parakīya-rasa* is ever existent.

"In the Third Chapter, Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī has explicitly accepted the fact that Kṛṣṇa appears in this material world at the end of the Dvāpara age of the twenty-eighth *catur-yuga* of Vaivaśvata Manu and brings with Him His Vraja-dhāma, which is the eternal abode of His highest pastimes. As the Lord appears by His own internal potency, so He also brings all His paraphernalia by the same internal potency, without extraneous help. It is further stated in *Caitanya-caritāmṛta* that the *parakīya* sentiment is existent only in that transcendental realm and nowhere else. This highest form of ecstasy can exist only in the most confidential part of the transcendental world, but by the causeless mercy of the Lord we can have a peep into that invisible Vraja.

"The transcendental mellow relished by the *gopīs* in Vraja is superexcellently featured in Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī. Mature assimilation of the transcendental humor of conjugal love is represented by Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, whose feelings are incomprehensible even to the Lord Himself. The intensity of Her loving service is the highest form of ecstasy. No one can surpass Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī in relishing the transcendental mellow qualities of the Lord. Therefore the Lord Himself agreed to assume the position of Rādhārāṇī in the form of Lord Śrī Gaurāṅga. He then relished the highest position of *parakīya-rasa* as exhibited in the transcendental abode of Vraja" (Cc. *Ādi* 4.50, purport).

"The loving affairs of Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are transcendental manifestations of the Lord's internal pleasure-giving potency. Although Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are one in Their identity, They separated Themselves eternally. Now these two transcendental identities have again united in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. I bow down to Him who has manifested Himself with the sentiment and complexion of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī although He is Kṛṣṇa Himself" (Cc. *Ādi* 1.5).

"The devotees who are imbued with all-love and who walk in the footsteps of the spiritual maids of Vraja, alone attain to the realm of Goloka. The different locations of the devotees in Goloka according to the respective differences in the nature of their *rasa,* i.e., mellow quality, are settled by the inconceivable power of Kṛṣṇa. The pure devotees following the devotees of Vraja and those following the pure devotees of Navadvīpa are located in the realm of Kṛṣṇa and Gaura respectively. The identical devotees of Vraja and Navadvīpa simultaneously attain to the pleasures of service in the realm of Kṛṣṇa and Gaura. Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī writes in his work *Gopāla-campū* that 'the supreme transcendental realm is called Goloka being the abode of *go* (transcendental cows) and *gopa* (transcendental cowherds). This is the seat of the *rasa* pastimes of the absolute Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Again the realm is called Śvetadvīpa owing to the realization of some of the *rasas* which are the inconceivable manifestation derived from the untouched purity of that supreme realm. The twofold entities of the supreme Goloka and the supreme Śvetadvīpa are indivisibly the realm of Goloka.' The gist of the whole matter is this—Goloka as Śvetadvīpa is eternally manifest because the pleasures of enjoyment of the *rasa* could not be had in its entirety in the pastimes of Kṛṣṇa in Vraja. He accepts the emotion and effulgence of His predominated moiety, Śrī Rādhikā, and makes an eternal pastime for the enjoyment of *Kṛṣṇa-rasa* there. Śrī Kṛṣṇacandra coveting to taste the following pleasures, viz., to realize (1) the nature of the greatness of love of Śrī Rādhā; (2) the nature of the wonderful sweetness of His love of which Śrī Rādhikā has got the taste; (3) the nature of the exquisite joy that accrues to Śrī Rādhā by Her realization of the sweetness of His love, took His birth, like the moon, in the ocean of the womb of Śrī Sacidevī" (*Brahma-saṁhitā* Text 5, purport).

After visiting Raval, devotees return to Viśrama-ghāṭa to bathe in the purifying waters of the Yamunā River and finish their *parikrama.*

Appendixes

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Sanskrit Pronunciation Guide

The system of transliteration used in this book conforms to a system that scholars in the last fifty years have accepted to indicate the pronunciation of each sound in the Sanskrit language.

The short vowel **a** is pronounced like the **u** in b**u**t, but long **ā** like the **a** in f**a**r. Short **i** is pronounced as in p**i**n, long **ī** as in p**i**que, short **u** as in p**u**ll, and long **ū** as in r**u**le. The vowel **ṛ** is pronounced like the **ri** in **ri**m. The vowels **e** and **ai** are pronounced as the **ey** in th**ey,** and **o** and **au** are pronounced as the **o** in g**o.** The *anusvāra* (**ṁ**), which is a pure nasal, is pronounced like the **n** in the French word *bo***n,** and *visarga* (**ḥ**), which is a strong aspirate, is pronounced as a final **h** sound. At the end of a couplet **aḥ** is pronounced like **aha,** and **iḥ** like **ihi.**

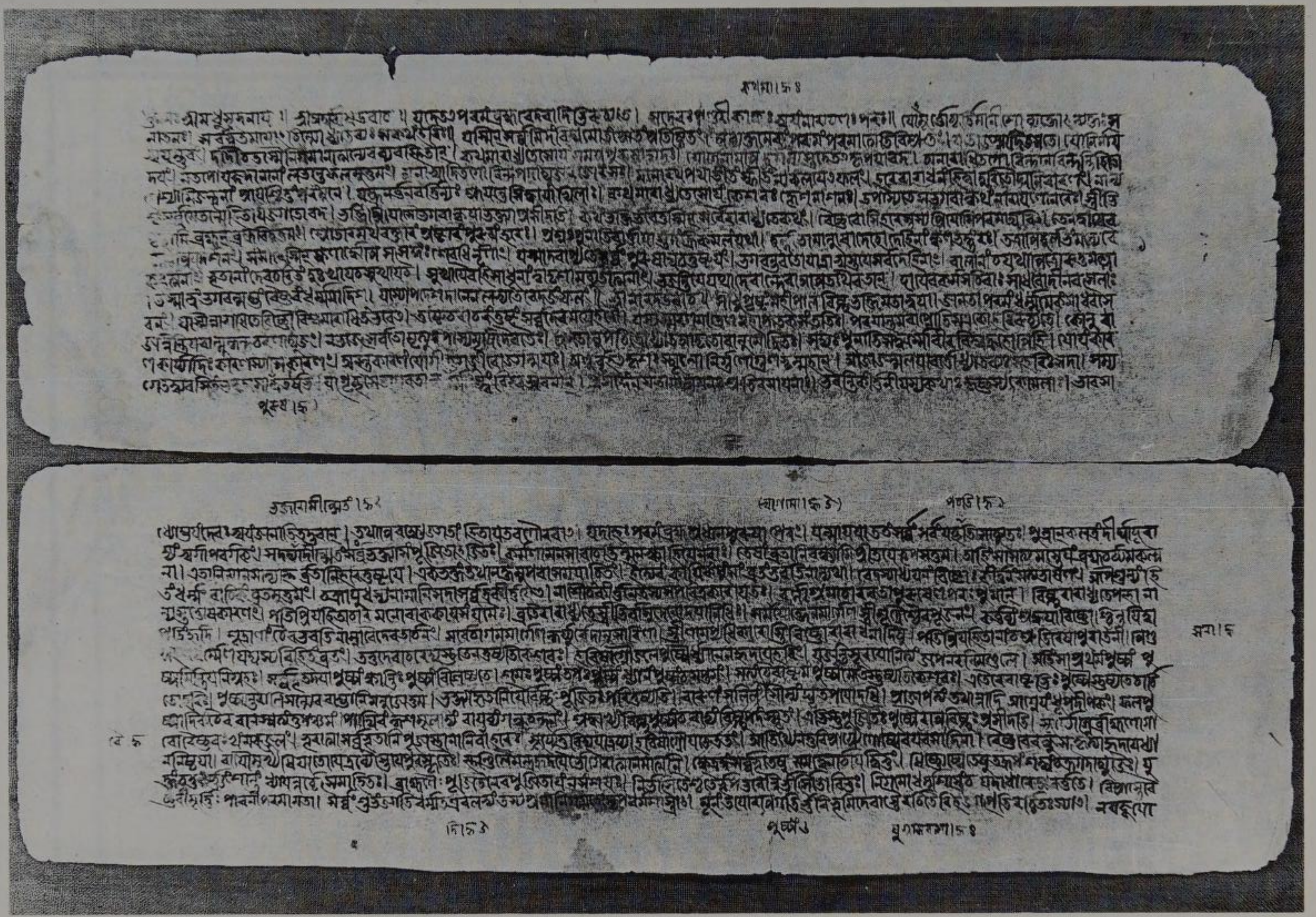
The guttural consonants—**k, kh, g, gh,** and **ṅ**—are pronounced from the throat in much the same manner as in English. **K** is pronounced as in **k**ite, **kh** as in Ec**kh**art, **g** as in **g**ive, **gh** as in dig **h**ard, and **ṅ** as in si**ng.**

The palatal consonants—**c, ch, j, jh,** and **ñ**—are pronounced from the palate with the middle of the tongue. **C** is pronounced as in **ch**air, **ch** as in staun**ch-h**eart, **j** as in **j**oy, **jh** as in he**dgeh**og, and **ñ** as in ca**ny**on.

The cerebral consonants—**ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh,** and **ṇ**—are pronounced with the tip of the tongue turned up and drawn back against the dome of the palate. **Ṭ** is pronounced as in **t**ub, **ṭh** as in ligh**t-h**eart, **ḍ** as in **d**ove, **ḍh** as in re**d-h**ot, and **ṇ** as in **n**ut. The dental consonants—**t, th, d, dh,** and **n**—are pronounced in the same manner as the cerebrals, but with the forepart of the tongue against the teeth.

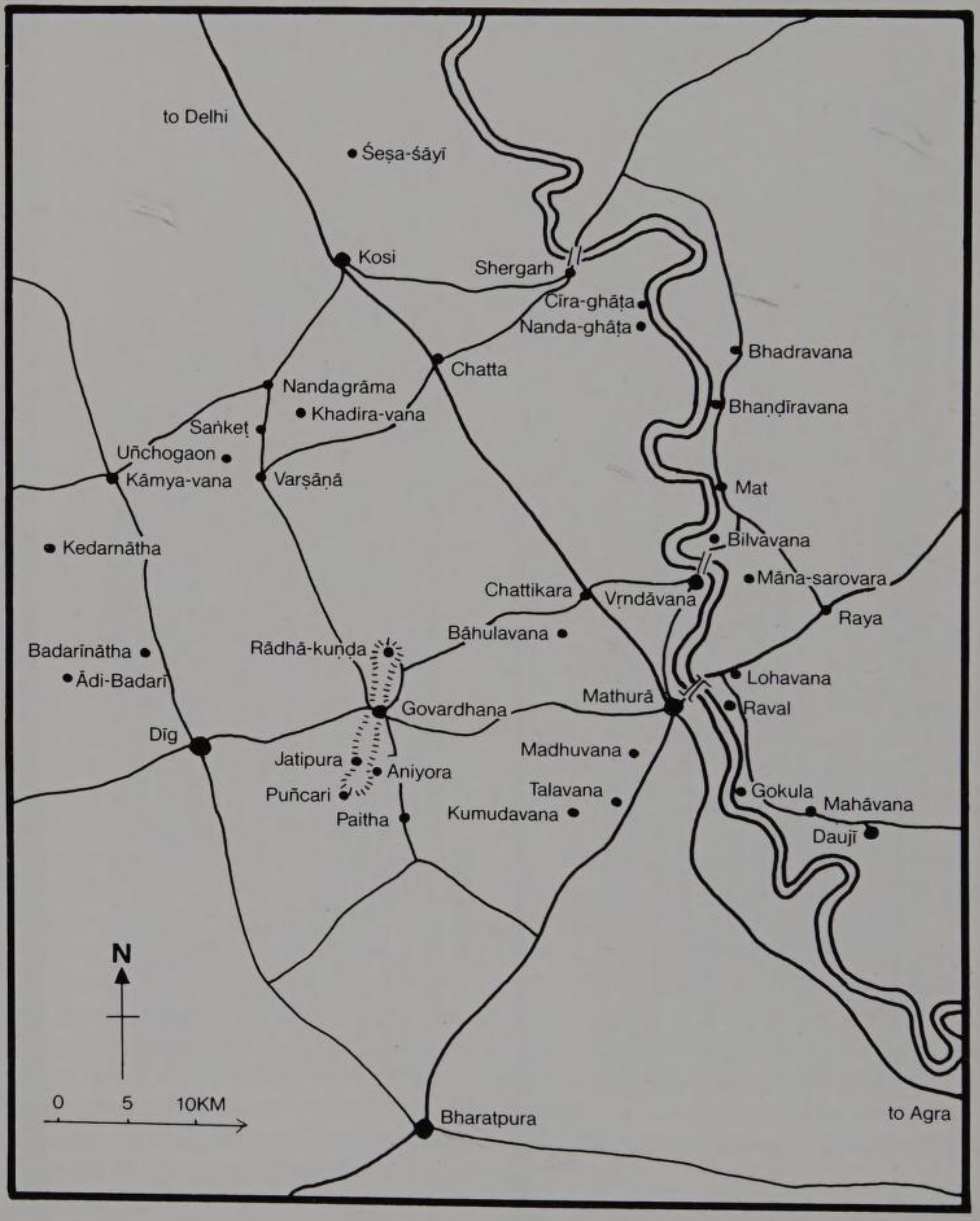
The labial consonants—**p, ph, b, bh,** and **m**—are pronounced with the lips. **P** is pronounced as in **p**ine, **ph** as in u**ph**ill, **b** as in **b**ird, **bh** as in ru**b-h**ard, and **m** as in **m**other.

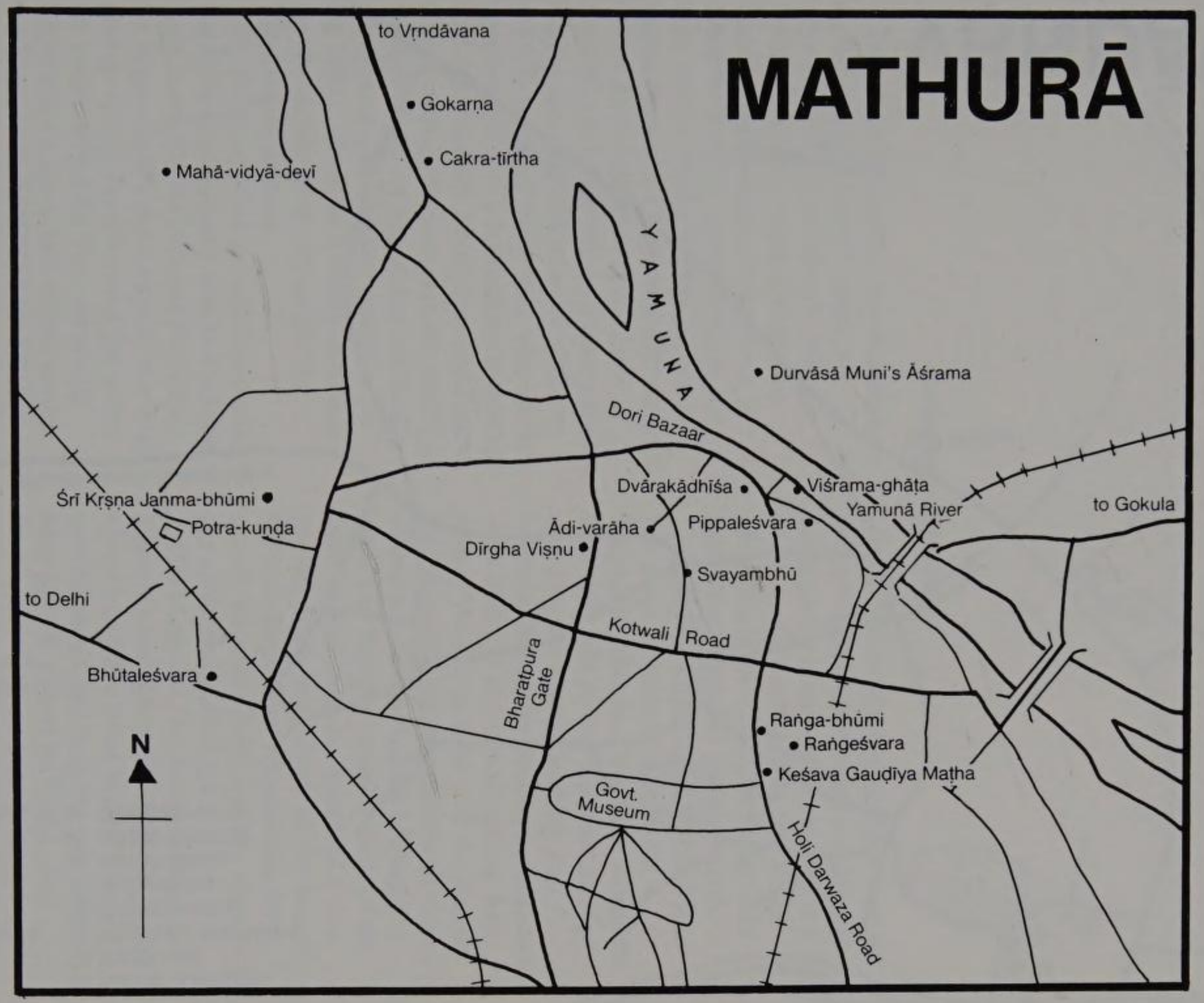
The semivowels—**y, r, l,** and **v**—are pronounced as in **y**es, **r**un, **l**ight, and **v**ine respectively. The sibilants—**ś, ṣ,** and **s**—are pronounced, respectively, as in the German word **s***prechen* and the English words **sh**ine and **s**un. The letter **h** is pronounced as in **h**ome.



This is a page from an original handwritten manuscript of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī. Although the six Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana lived very austerely, with no fixed residence, they wrote on palm leaves and produced many volumes of Sanskrit literature expounding the philosophy of Lord Caitanya.

ŚRĪ VRAJA-MAṆḌALA




MATHURĀ
to Vṛndāvana
Gokarṇa
Cakra-tīrtha
Mahā-vidyā-devī
YAMUNA
Durvāsā Muni's Āśrama
Dori Bazaar
Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janma-bhūmi
Potra-kuṇḍa
Dvārakādhīśa
Viśrama-ghāṭa
Yamunā River
to Gokula
Ādi-varāha
Pippaleśvara
Dīrgha Viṣṇu
Svayambhū
to Delhi
Kotwali Road
Bharatpura Gate
Bhūtaleśvara
Raṅga-bhūmi
Raṅgeśvara
Keśava Gauḍīya Maṭha
N
Govt. Museum
Holi Darwaza Road

1. Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma
2. Kāliya-ghāṭa
3. Rādhā-Madanamohana
4. Baṅkī-bihārī
5. Rādhā-vallabha
6. Imlītala
7. Sevā-kuñja
8. Rādhā-Śyāmasundara
9. Rādhā-Dāmodara
10. Nityānanda-vaṭa
11. Nidhivana
12. Rādhā-ramaṇa
13. Rādhā-Gokulānanda
14. Keśī-ghāṭa
15. Rādhā-Gopīnātha
16. Vaṁśī-vaṭa
17. Gopīśvara Mahādeva
18. Brahma-kuṇḍa
19. Raṅganātha
20. 64 Samādhis
21. Rādhā-Govinda
22. Dāvānala-kuṇḍa

Yamunā River

Loi Bazaar

Bhaktivedanta Swami Marg

Bus Station

Mathurā Road

Parikrama Marg

N

VṚNDĀVANA

Acknowledgements

Two days before the five-hundreth anniversary of Lord Caitanya's appearance day, in March 1986, Daśaratha dāsa, (now Daśaratha Paṇḍita Swami) encouraged me to compile a picture guidebook to the holy places of Vraja. Having read Padmalocaṇa's *Cintāmaṇi-dhāma* and Patita Pāvana's *Touring the Land of Lord Kṛṣṇa,* I considered Daśaratha's suggestion and discussed it with my wife, Samapriyā-devī dāsī, who further encouraged me. I remembered that the first information I had ever read about Kṛṣṇa in this lifetime was an article in *Back to Godhead* magazine entitled *Vṛndāvana: The Highest Paradise,* by Dr. O.B.L. Kapoor. I resolved to take up the challenge to try to glorify Vṛndāvana-dhāma.

By Kṛṣṇa's grace my service during the following months was to lead the boys from the Vṛndāvana Gurukula on twice-weekly field trips to the holy places. Every Tuesday and Saturday we would travel by bus, driven by Rūpa-kiśora dāsa, and enjoy seeing the places where Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa perform Their *līlās.* Acyuta dāsa faithfully accompanied us on these outings and took many of the photographs that appear in the book. He also drew the maps of Vṛndāvana, Mathurā, and the Vraja-maṇḍala.

When the rainy season arrived, I learned from Bhūrijana dāsa how to use Dhanudhara Swami's computer. I compiled a rough draft, revised it a bit after circumambulating the Vraja-maṇḍala with ISKCON *pada-yātrā,* and traveled to the United States.

While visiting Philadelphia I had the good fortune to meet with Nāgarāja dāsa and his wife, Prāṇadā-devī dāsī. He edited the manuscript and she did the typesetting and oversaw the entire production. Kṣamā-devī dāsī did the proofreading. My friend Yamarāja dāsa did the layout and design. Gopīpāraṇadhana dāsa edited the Sanskrit, and Mahendra dāsa and Ravīndranātha dāsa of the BBT in Los Angeles supplied a few photographs and many of the beautiful paintings. The Vrindavana Research Institute provided the copies of the Gosvāmī's writings.

His Holiness Nārāyaṇa Mahārāja, Viśvambara Goswami, and Shrivatsa Goswami have been kind to me for several years, guiding me as I stumbled to new places in Vraja, and, finally, my father-in-law, Arthur Leschen, and mother-in-law, Sylvia Leschen, Ph.D., have kindly provided a loan to help with printing costs.

Without the help of all these people I could not have offered this service to my spiritual master. I am deeply thankful to all of them.

Vṛndāvana

by Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

vṛndāvana ramyasthāna, divya cintāmaṇi-dhāma,
ratana-mandira manohara
āvṛta kālindī-nīre, rājahaṁsa kéli kore,
tāhe śobhe kanaka-kamala

tāra madhye hema-pīṭha, aṣṭa-dale veṣṭita,
aṣṭa-dale pradhānā nāyikā
tāra madhye ratnāsane, bose āchen dui-jane,
śyāma-saṅge sundarī rādhikā

rūpa-lābaṇyarāśi, amiya paḍiche khasi,
hāsya-parihāsa-sambhāṣaṇe
narottama-dāsa koya, nitya-līlā sukha-moya
sadāi sphuruka more mane

Vṛndāvana is a transcendental, beautiful place. It is in the spiritual sky, where everything is made of touchstone, which fulfills all desires. All the temples there are bedecked with costly jewels. In that far distant place is the River Yamunā, which is full of lotus flowers. In the midst of that throng of lotus flowers there is a golden boat, appearing like another big lotus flower, with eight petals, who are the eight chief *gopīs* who always surround Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. In the surrounding petals is a golden throne, where the two transcendental lovers, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, are seated. Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī is the governing Deity of all the *gopīs*. There is no comparison to Rādhārāṇī's beauty and the luster of Her transcendental body. The so-called beauty of the moon has fallen on the ground in the presence of Rādhārāṇī's beauty. In that assembly of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa and Their principal associates, there is a flood of laughing and joking as they address one another. Narottama dāsa says that the eternal pastimes of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa are full of transcendental pleasure. Let us all remember them now and then and thus become happy even in this material world.

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